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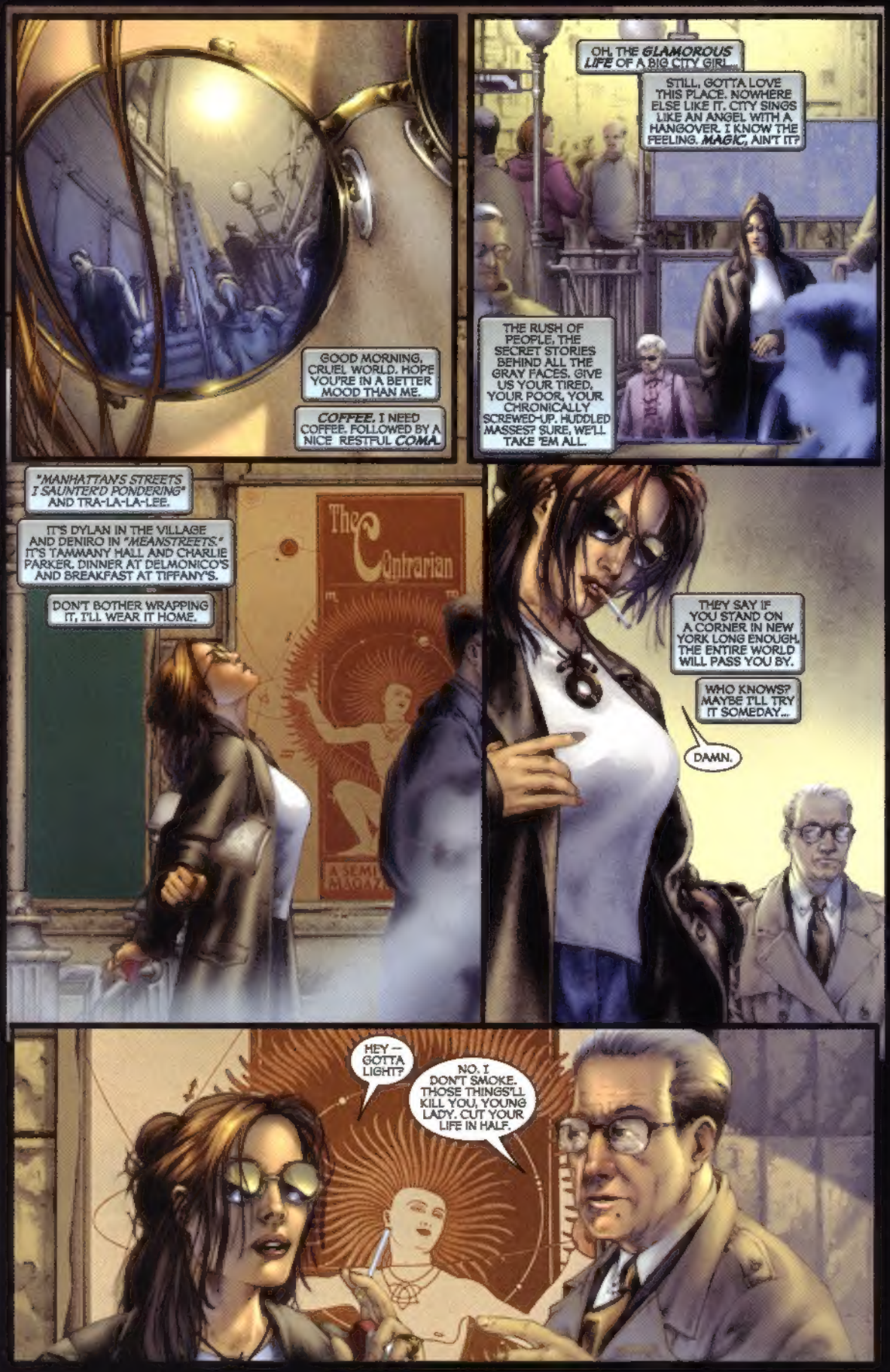
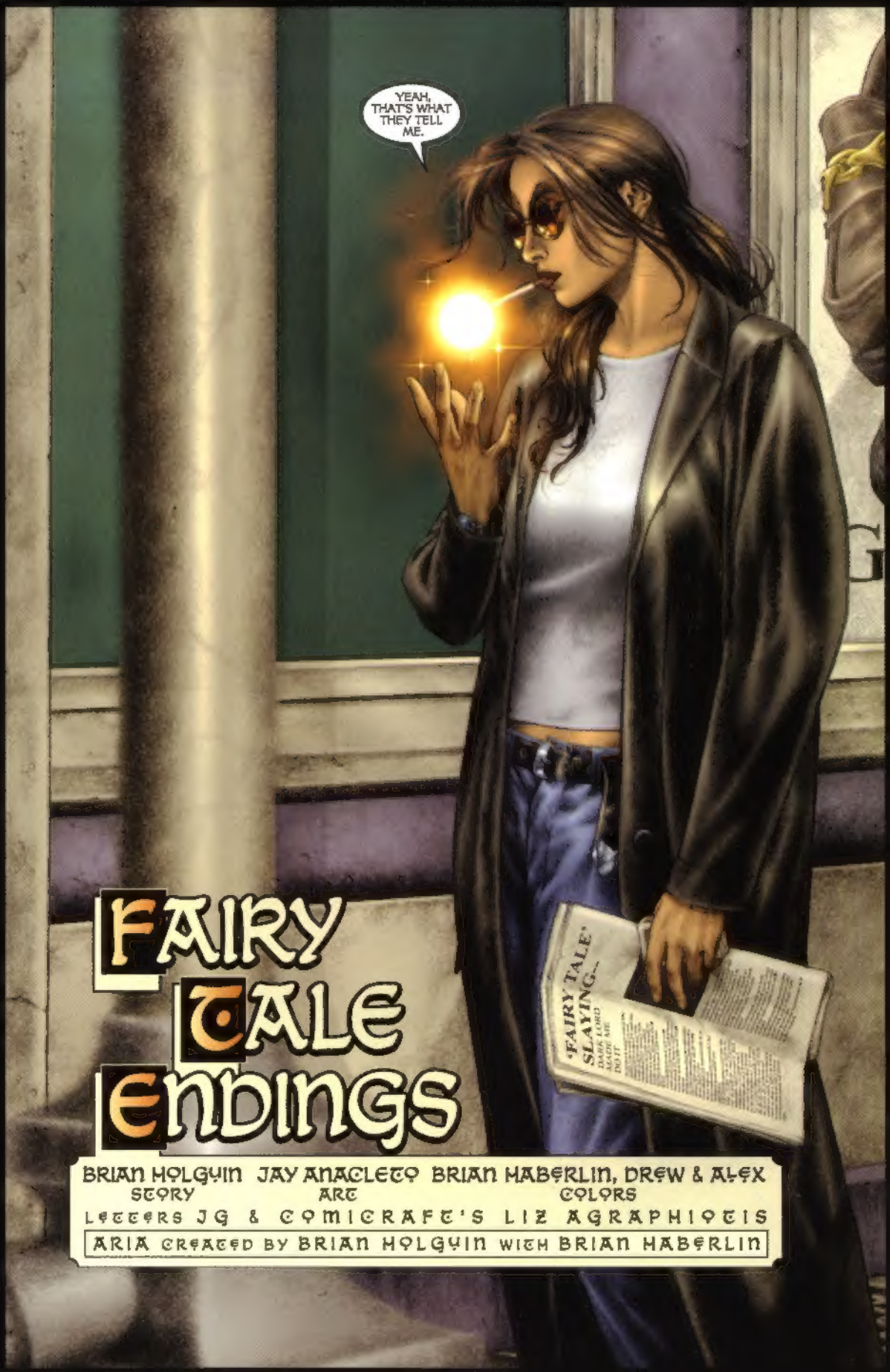

GOOD MORNING, CRUEL WORLD. HOPE YOU'RE IN A BETTER MOOD THAN ME.
COFFEE. I NEED COFFEE. FOLLOWED BY A NICE RESTFUL *COMA*.
OH, THE *GLAMOROUS LIFE* OF A BIG CITY GIRL...
STILL, GOTTA LOVE THIS PLACE. NOWHERE ELSE LIKE IT. CITY SINGS LIKE AN ANGEL WITH A HANGOVER. I KNOW THE FEELING. *MAGIC*, AIN'T IT?
THE RUSH OF PEOPLE, THE SECRET STORIES BEHIND ALL THE GRAY FACES. GIVE US YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR, YOUR CHRONICALLY SCREWED-UP, HUDDLED MASSES? SURE, WE'LL TAKE 'EM ALL.
"MANHATTAN'S STREETS I SAUNTER'D PONDERING" AND TRA-LA-LA-LEE.
IT'S DYLAN IN THE VILLAGE AND DENIRO IN *"MEANSTREETS."* IT'S TAMMANY HALL AND CHARLIE PARKER. DINNER AT DELMONICO'S AND BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S.
DON'T BOTHER WRAPPING IT, I'LL WEAR IT HOME.
The Contrarian
THEY SAY IF YOU STAND ON A CORNER IN NEW YORK LONG ENOUGH, THE ENTIRE WORLD WILL PASS YOU BY.
WHO KNOWS? MAYBE I'LL TRY IT SOMEDAY...
DAMN.
HEY — GOTTA LIGHT?
NO. I DON'T SMOKE. THOSE THINGS'LL KILL YOU, YOUNG LADY. CUT YOUR LIFE IN HALF.



FAIRY TALE ENDINGS

BRIAN HOLGUIN
STORY

JAY ANACLETO
ART

BRIAN HABERLIN, DREW & ALEX
COLORS

LETTERS JG & COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS

ARIA CREATED BY BRIAN HOLGUIN WITH BRIAN HABERLIN

WELL, AT LEAST IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY. ONE OF THOSE COOL, ANYTHING-CAN-HAPPEN-BETTER-PACK-A-TOOTHBRUSH KIND OF DAYS.
A DAY FOR ADVENTURE.
YOU CAN TASTE IT ON THE WIND, FEEL IT IN YOUR STOMACH.
"AND SO NOW POOR TINKERBELL LAY WEAK AND DYING" -- LOOK, SHE SEEMS SO SAD. "SO PETER SAID, 'IF YOU BELIEVE IN FAERIES, CLAP YOUR HANDS..."
REMEMBER THIS PART? DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAERIES? CLAP YOUR HANDS!
A GREAT DAY TO BE YOUNG.
MOM, LOOK... THAT GIRL!
HONEY, GET BACK HERE, PLEASE. DON'T BOTHER THE NICE LADY.

HOME SWEET HOME. WELL, BETTER GET AT IT. A BROAD HAS TO MAKE A LIVING.
HMM. WHAT'S THIS?
A LETTER FROM THE OLD COUNTY. AUNTIE BELL, I BET.
OPEN
YEP.
Dearest Kildare, Sweet niece, I hope that all is well with you. It has been so very long since you have graced us with a visit, we miss you desperately...
HOW NICE. LET'S CUT TO THE GOSSIP. BLAH BLAH BLAH...
... the entire court was in uproar. She wore it with good grace, but between you and I, the Queen of Cups is a Grand Bitch...
SAME OLD AUNTIE BELL.
... Please write as soon as soon as it is convenient. We are always thrilled to hear of your adventures in that awful "place" you've chosen to live.
Till than, I trust the fates will keep you happy and well.
All my love,
Dame Christabel
P.S. Please look in on your poor cousin Gwynnion. We worry about her. She hasn't been the same since that awful 'Cottingley' matter. Why don't you ALL just COME HOME!
GWYNNION. "MAD GINNY." POOR GIRL. AUNT BELL'S RIGHT. I PROBABLY SHOULD CHECK IN ON HER. IT'S BEEN AGES.
AND NOW, YOUR LOCAL NEWS...
HERE IT IS: SOME JUNK-BOND MILLIONAIRE WAS HACKED TO BITS WITH AN AX LAST NIGHT BY HIS CRAZY SON. CUTE.
ACCORDING TO HIS LAWYERS, THE SON SAYS HE HEARS VOICES, SAYS "THE FAERIES MADE ME DO IT." CLAIMS TO BE PREPARING THE WORLD FOR THE COMING OF THE DARK ONE.
AND LOOK HERE, THERE'S EVEN A CARTOON SKETCH OF A WINGED SPRITE WITH A LITTLE TINY HATCHET. DOUBLE CUTE.
"THE COMING OF THE DARK ONE." CAN'T SAY I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.
TING TLING
UH-OH. INCOMING. I SWEAR, SOMETIMES I THINK THIS GIG WOULD BE PERFECT IF IT WASN'T FOR ALL THE DAMN CUSTOMERS...

DO YOU HAVE ABSINTHE? Y'KNOW, THE DRINK, LIKE IN THAT TRENT REZNOR VIDEO?
YEAH, WE ARE MISTRESSES OF THE SHADOWS, LOST PILGRIMS FROM NIGHT'S PLUTONIAN SHORE. WE SEEK SWEET OBLIVION.

ABSINTHE? WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO BUY SOME CRACK WHILE YOU'RE AT IT?
FIRST OF ALL, IT TASTES LIKE SOUR CAT PISS AND PEOPLE ONLY STARTED DRINKING IT BECAUSE THERE WAS A HEAVY TAX ON WINE IN PARIS.

SECOND, IF YOU ASK ME...
...ANYONE WHO DESCRIBES THEMSELVES AS "LOST PILGRIMS FROM NIGHT'S PLUTONIAN SHORE" OUGHT TO BE SHOT IN THE KNEECAPS.
HAVE A NICE DAY.

...AND HER EYES. THEY'RE SO BLUE... DUDE, IT'S LIKE... I DON'T KNOW LIKE TY-D-BOWL! I MEAN, I JUST CAN'T GET HER OUT OF MY MIND. HAUNTED. THAT'S WHAT I AM. SO I WAS... WELL...

YOU'RE SAYING YOU WANT A LOVE POTION, RIGHT?
UH... YES. PLEASE. A LOVE POTION WOULD BE GREAT.
AND ABOUT WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING TO SPEND IN ORDER TO WIN THE HEART OF THIS JEWEL OF FEMININE VIRTUE?
I DON'T KNOW. TEN DOLLARS? MAYBE 12.

PAL, YOU'RE A REAL PRINCE. ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT?

THE TENANT, HE LEAVE IT BEHIND. HONEST. LOOKS OLD, NO? I HEARD HIM SAY BEFORE IT BELONG TO ARTIE. SO I FIGURE MAYBE IT'S ARTHUR. YOU KNOW — KING ARTHUR.
MAYBE'S MAGIC OR SOMETHING. I HEARD YOU COULD TELL..

WELL, SEE THAT INSCRIPTION? I BELIEVE IT WILL SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE SWORD'S TRUE PROVENANCE.
NOW, I ADMIT THAT INFORMATION ON THE HISTORICAL ARTHUR IS SKETCHY AT BEST, AND SCHOLARS OFTEN DISAGREE...
BUT I FEEL IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THE FABLED KING OF THE BRITONS WAS NEVER, IN FACT...
...A MEMBER OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS. JUST A HUNCH.
OH.

OH, WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE!

SEVEN HELLS, I'M *EXHAUSTED.*

I SUPPOSE IF I HAD ANY SENSE I WOULD TAKE A LONG BATH AND CALL IT AN EARLY NIGHT. MAYBE LOOK INTO THIS *"DARK LORD"* BUSINESS.

BUT I *CAN'T.* PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SEE. FRIENDS VISITING FROM OUT OF TOWN. HOW CAN I SAY NO?

WORK ALL DAY AND DANCE ALL NIGHT. NEVER EVEN STOPS TO CATCH HER BREATH. REMARKABLE LASS, REALLY. HOW DOES SHE DO IT?

WELL, I SUPPOSE A GIRL HAS TO KEEP *SOME SECRETS.*

ENGLAND. THE COTSWALDS.
PRETTY. SO PRETTY. LIKE LI'L BUTT'RFLIES. LITTLE ANGELS
AYE! PUT A CORK IN IT, SUNSHINE, OR I'LL COME PUT MY BOOT UP YER ARSE!
LITTLE ANGELS TRY TO FLY AWAY. NAUGHTY LITTLE THINGS. NAUGHTY NAUGHTY. NASTY THINGS.
NAUGHTY THINGS. BUT YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH. SOON ENOUGH. YES, SIR. BUT SOON ENOUGH WILL BE TOO LATE.
TOO LATE, IT'LL BE. ALL BE DEAD SOON. ALL DEAD ALL DEAD. YES SIR...

...COUNT IBLIS AND HIS WIFE, FROM THE VELVET MARCHES. THEIR FIRST TIME IN NEW YORK. EVERYONE SHOULD BE THERE. ROBIN...LULLABY... SWANNEE...
MAX AND ONDINE... MAYBE EVEN THE SPHINX... AND OF COURSE, THE PUG, WHO'S PROBABLY TERRORIZING THEM AS SPEAK, WHICH IS WHY I HAVE TO HURRY.
RUNNING OFF TO MEET A MARRIED MAN... HOW VERY LIKE YOU.
WHO ASKED YOU? BESIDES, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT... HEY, DOES THIS DRESS MAKE MY BUTT LOOK BIG?
DEFINE "BIG."
FUNNY. KEEP IT UP AND I'LL GO GET THE HAMMER.
YOU WOULDN'T DARE. IT'S BAD LUCK, IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD.
HEY REMEMBER WHO YOU'RE MESSING WITH. I CAN DO SEVEN YEARS STANDING ON MY HEAD.
SIGHE LADY KILDARE OF THE HOUSE OF DANNAN, YOURS IS THE VERY PARAGON OF POSTERIORS, INDEED A "BUTT WITHOUT COMPARE." POETS SHOULD WEEP AT THE SIGHT OF IT.
THAT'S BETTER. THANKS.
GOTTA RUN.
BITCH.
I HEARD THAT!

THERE'S A LOT OF BARS AND NIGHTCLUBS IN NEW YORK, BUT NONE OF THEM CAN HOLD A CANDLE TO ***DION'S.*** I SHOULD KNOW.

YOU WON'T FIND IT IN ANY OF THE TOURIST GUIDES, BUT BELIEVE ME, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE IT.

HI, DION. HOW ARE YOU?

KILDARE! YOU LOOK LOVELY, MY DEAR.

SO AM I FASHIONABLY LATE?

WELL, LET'S SEE. THE PUG'S BEEN HERE SINCE ***NOON.*** THE OTHERS FOR MAYBE AN HOUR OR SO.

O!! TINKERBELL! OVER HERE, LOVE!

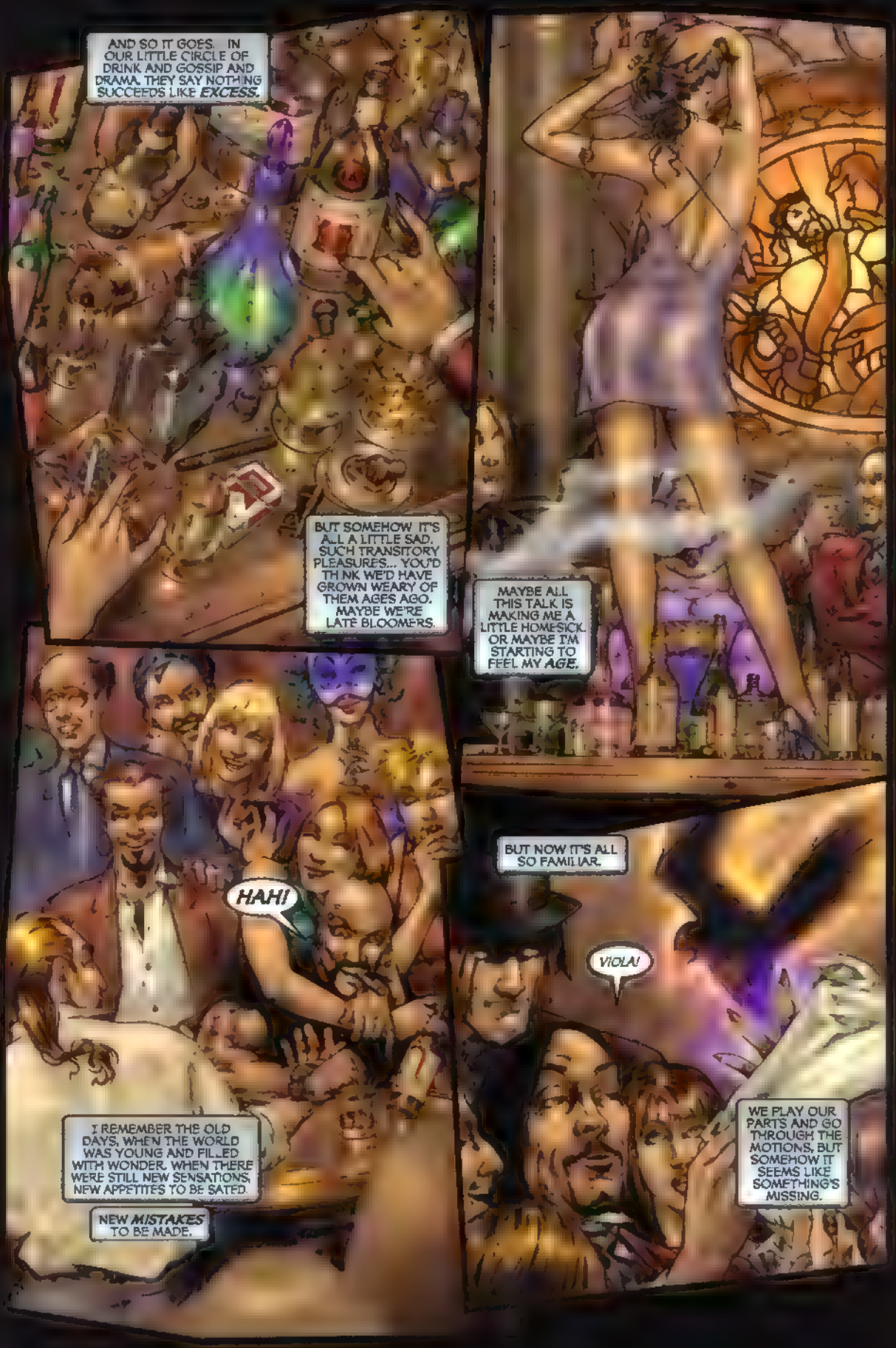
'SCUSE ME.

PARDON ME. GET YOUR HAND OFF MY ASS.

THANK YOU.

HEY! WHAT'S ALL THIS? YOU DIDN'T START WITHOUT ME, DID YOU?

LADY KILDARE... IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU. THIS IS MY WIFE DIANDRA, AND MY VALET, MAN.
HI. HOW DO YOU LIKE THE BIG CITY?
HOW VERY STRANGE IT IS. LIKE SOME PYTHIAN NIGHTMARE. IT'S DELICIOUS.
WE LIKE IT. SO WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE? BUSINESS?
NO. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I DO NO TRADE HERE. WE WERE RETURNING TO THE VELVET MARCHES FROM THE CRIMSON SHORE ...AND SINCE IT WAS ON THE WAY. MORE OR LESS...
HERE WE ARE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH YOU RESEMBLE YOUR MOTHER. EXCEPT FOR THE WARDROBE, OF COURSE.
THANK YOU. I BELIEVE I'LL TAKE THAT AS A COMPLIMENT.
HEY, D! ANOTHER ROUND! MAKE IT THE GOOD STUFF THIS TIME, MATE.
I ONLY HAVE THE GOOD STUFF. YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT BY NOW.
SO YOU KEEP TELLING ME.
JUST KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM, YOU MADE GREEK'
A TOAST! HERE'S TO HONOR... GET ON HER AND STAY ON HER!
THE PUG. PROBABLY MY CLOSEST FRIEND, ALTHOUGH THAT MAY NOT BE THE WORLDS' HIGHEST COMPLIMENT.
THE MORE HE ANNOYS YOU, THE MORE HE GROWS ON YOU. IT'S A GIFT, REALLY


AND SO IT GOES. IN OUR LITTLE CIRCLE OF DRINK AND GOSSIP AND DRAMA, THEY SAY NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE *EXCESS*.
BUT SOMEHOW IT'S ALL A LITTLE SAD. SUCH TRANSITORY PLEASURES... YOU'D THINK WE'D HAVE GROWN WEARY OF THEM AGES AGO. MAYBE WE'RE LATE BLOOMERS.
MAYBE ALL THIS TALK IS MAKING ME A LITTLE HOMESICK. OR MAYBE I'M STARTING TO FEEL MY *AGE*.
HAH!
I REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS, WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG AND FILLED WITH WONDER. WHEN THERE WERE STILL NEW SENSATIONS, NEW APPETITES TO BE SATED.
NEW *MISTAKES* TO BE MADE.
BUT NOW IT'S ALL SO FAMILIAR.
VIOLA!
WE PLAY OUR PARTS AND GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS, BUT SOMEHOW IT SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING'S MISSING.

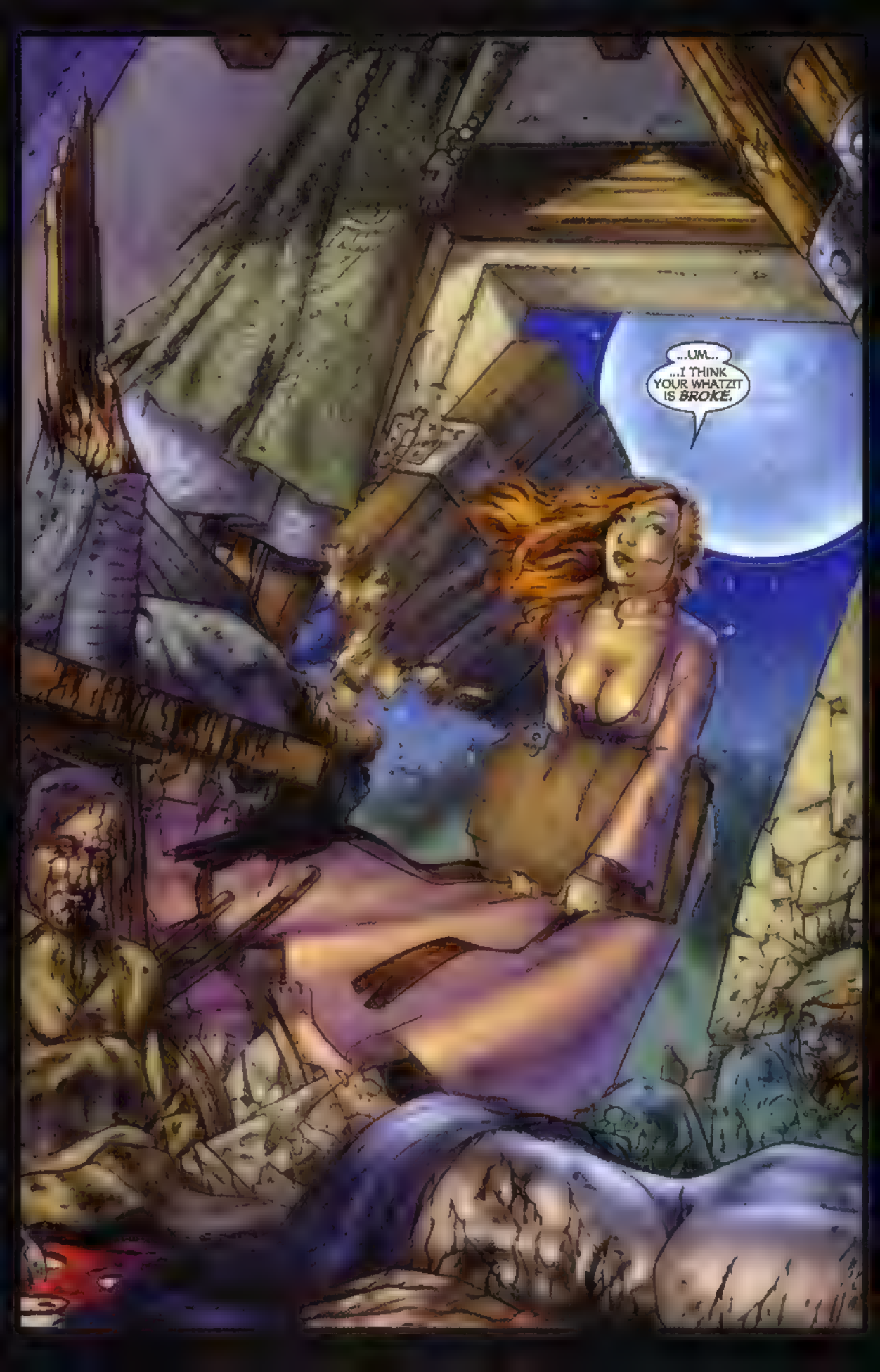
AH, BUT THERE WAS *TIME*...
TAKE *DION* FOR EXAMPLE. SUCH A SWEET SOUL. TO LOOK AT HIM, YOU'D NEVER GUESS THAT ONCE HE DROVE WOMEN TO MURDEROUS FITS OF *LUST*.
ROVING BANDS OF *MAENADS*, SCOURING THE COUNTRYSIDE IN SEXUAL FRENZY, SCREAMING LIKE BANSHEES AND TEARING MEN TO PIECES..
AND I THINK OF POOR, DOOMED *ICARUS*... THE BRASH YOUTH WHO FLEW TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN AND PAID FOR THAT HUBRIS WITH HIS LIFE.
HIS STORY IS ALWAYS TOLD AS A CAUTIONARY TALE: *"DON'T PLAY WITH FIRE OR YOU'LL GET BURNED."*
BUT SOMETIMES I THINK MAYBE EVERYONE HAS MISSED THE POINT. MAYBE THE WHOLE POINT OF THE STORY IS THAT ICARUS GETS TO *TOUCH* THE *SUN*.
AND MAYBE THAT'S *WORTH* CRASHING INTO THE ROCKY COAST OF THE AEGEAN.
MAYBE THAT'S WHAT WE *ALL* SHOULD HAVE DONE. DANCE OUT OUR LIVES IN ONE GOLDEN HOUR, RATHER LINGERING AT THE PARTY LONG AFTER THE CHAMPAGNE HAS GONE FLAT.
LIKE THE WISE MAN ONCE SAID: *"BETTER TO BURN OUT THAN FADE AWAY."*
SOMETIMES I LOOK AT THIS WORLD AND IT MOVES ME TO TEARS. THE JOY AND TERROR AND THE MAD BLOODY DRAMA OF IT ALL.
AND I WONDER WHY *THEY* NEVER SEEM TO REALLY SEE IT. MAYBE ONE LIFETIME JUST ISN'T ENOUGH. OR MAYBE IT'S TOO MUCH. I CAN'T SAY.
BUT THE TRUTH, TO BE PERFECTLY PLAIN, IS THAT PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR *MAGIC* IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES.
...LADY KILDARE?
HMM?
I SAID, WOULD YOU CARE TO DANCE, LADY KILDARE?
OH. FORGIVE ME. I WAS *MILES AWAY*.

ENGLAND.
THE YEAR IS GROWING OLD. CAN'T YOU FEEL IT? THE GREEN DOOR OF SUMMERSPRING HAS SLAMMED SHUT. IT SEEMS AS IF JUST YESTERDAY IT WAS MIDSUMMER'S EVE.
OH, HOW WE'D DANCE IN THE MOONLIGHT, BLOWING KISSES TO THE STARS. AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN WOULD CLIMB DOWN THE BECK AND LEAVE CAKES AND SUCH FOR US.
AND WE WOULD SMILE AND SING AND JUMP ABOUT. 'TWAS GRAND, IT WAS.
BUT NO ONE LEAVES CAKES ANY MORE. I DON'T KNOW WHY. PERHAPS THEY GOT FRIGHTENED.
LORD CROKER, WOULD YOU CARE FOR MORE TEA? IT'S BREWED WITH MY TEARS, YOU KNOW.
SOME TEARS ARE SALTY, BUT NOT MINE.
DID I EVER TELL YOU OF MY DAYS AT COURT? IN THE DAYS GOOD QUEEN MAB?
WHERE DO ALL THE OLD YEARS GO, I WONDER? WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM WHEN NO ONE'S USING THEM ANYMORE?

A TOAST.. TO ABSENT FRIENDS!
AYE! TO ABSENT FRIENDS.
CHEERS!
MAY FORTUNE FIND THEM WELL!
GRIFFIN'S
FREE HOUSE
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE'S GWYNNION? I THOUGHT SHE WAS COMING.
OH, THAT POOR GIRL. SHE'S HAD A HARD A LOT.
WELL, I'M SURE SHE'LL SHOW UP. SHE'S NOT ONE TO MISS THE FULL MOON FEAST.
MORE STOUT, LADS?
CHEERS, MARCUS.
AND, PLEASE, HARPER, I HOPE WE CAN PERSUADE YOU TO GRACE US WITH ONE OF YOUR BALLADS.
DAMN, WOMAN, DON'T GET HIM STARTED! HE'S BEEN BUTCHERING THE SAME TIRED SONGS FOR SO LONG THEY'VE STOPPED BEGGING FOR MERCY.
AYE! AN INSULT? THAT'S MY THANKS, IS IT?
BUT THIS LASS, SHE ALWAYS HAD A TUNEFUL EAR.
WHEN SHE WAS A WEE GIRL, I'D SING TO HER FROM THE MEADOWS ON SUMMER NIGHTS --
-- AND SHE'D LEAVE APPLES AND CHESTNUTS ON AN OLD TREE STUMP!
YOU REMEMBER? OH, MY PARENTS THOUGHT I WAS MAD! BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD FRIENDS TO ME. ALL OF YOU.

WELL, I WAS ALWAYS ONE TO TREAT MY BETTERS WITH RESPECT.
OH PLEASE! YOU FORGET THAT TIME AT THE BELTAINE FAIR? "AND YOU MY GOOD QUEEN, CAN KISS MY DIMPLED ARSE!"
I WAS DRUNK...
.. I'LL NEVER LIVE THAT DOWN, WILL I?
HA HA HA HA HA
SKRITCH SKRITCH
HMMM? MAYBE THAT'S OUR POOR GINNY NOW.
GOOD TIMES, THOSE WERE. GOOD TIMES.
SORRY, MATE. LAST CALL WAS HOURS AGO. PRIVATE PARTY NOW. INVITEES ONLY.
IS IT THE CHAP FROM THE V.A.T.?
TOP ME OFF THERE, LUV. CHEERS.
D'JA HEAR ME? WE'RE CLOSED. ON YER BIKE, SON.

SUCH A LOVELY NIGHT. THE MOON SO FAT AND GRINNING. IT'S... OH, DEAR... THE FEAST!
I WAS MEANT TO MEET MY FRIENDS. I FORGOT... I HOPE THEY'RE NOT CROSS.
I'M SORRY, BUT I MUST AWAY. I'M LATE ALREADY...
...WHAT'S THIS THEN? YOU DON'T BELONG DOWN HERE ON THE GROUND, DO YOU?
I'M SO SORRY I'M LATE. I'M SUCH A WOODEN HEAD SOMETIMES.
BY THE WAY, MUSTER MARK...


...UM...
...I THINK YOUR WHATZIT IS BROKE.

NEW YORK.
WELL, I GUESS THIS IS IT. IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU.
THE PLEASURE WAS ALL MINE, MY DEAR.
IF I MAY BE SO BOLD, LADY KILDARE...
...I WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT YOU WITH A GIFT. A SMALL TOKEN OF THE FRIENDSHIP THAT NOW GROWS BETWEEN US.
NO THANK YOU.
BUT I INSIST. PLEASE DO NOT INSULT ME BY REJECTING MY GENEROSITY.
DON'T INSULT ME BY "INSISTING," IBLIS.
VERY WELL. ANOTHER TIME, PERHAPS, AS I SAID, IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE. KEEP WELL.
YEAH. IT WAS NICE. COME BACK SOON.
DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOU IN THE ASS.
HAH!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT CREEP TRIED TO "GIFT" ME? WHAT, WAS I BORN YESTERDAY?
HARDLY. STILL, IN ALL, HE'S A PRETTY NICE BLOKE, DON'T YA THINK?
FOR EVIL INCARNATE, I MEAN?

"DANDY IN THE UNDERWORLD... DAHN-DEE IN THE UNNERWORLD... WHEN WILL YOU COME UP FOR A-AIR?"
AH, THAT'S A RELIEF.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DOING THAT. THIS ISN'T THE DARK AGES, PUG.
O!! HOLD ON. I KNOW THAT FELLA!
DARLING, THAT'S MOZART.
YEAH, THAT'S HIM. WOLFIE. NICE BLOKE. GREAT PARTIES. TINKLED AROUND WITH THE OL' IVORIES, IF I RECALL.
YOU'RE SERIOUS. YOU REALLY KNEW MOZART. WHEN THE HELL WAS THIS?
A WHILE BACK. I STUMBLED AROUND VIENNA FOR A FEW YEARS. LOT OF FUN.
MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF YOUR LEGENDARY "LOST DECADES."
YEAH. BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN AGES. WONDER WHAT HE'S UP TO.
NOT MUCH. HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR ABOUT A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.
OH. NO WONDER HE DOESN'T WRITE.
THAT'S A SHAME. TIME FLIES, DON'T IT?
THAT IT DOES, DARLING. THAT IT DOES.

WHAT A NIGHT. I'M GONNA PAY FOR IT IN THE MORNING. I CAN TELL.
SEE YOU SOON, DARLING.
G'NIGHT. YOU GET SOME SLEEP NOW, YOU HEAR.
AND SO WE CALL IT A NIGHT TIME TO GO UPSTAIRS AND TUCK MYSELF IN.
I'LL TRY.
I JUST WANT TO WRAP MYSELF UP IN THE WARM EIDERDOWN OF DREAM AND SLEEP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, LIKE A PRINCESS IN ONE OF THE OLD STORIES.
HMMM.
"IF I SHOULD FALL FROM GRACE WITH GOD, WHERE THE DOCTORS CAN'T RE-LIEVE ME --"
YOU KNOW IN THE OLD DAYS, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, FAIRY STORIES HAD GR.SLY, HORRIFIC ENDINGS.
THE HERO IS DEVOURED BY THE FEARSOME BEAST... THE YOUNG GIRL DISSOLVES INTO SEA FOAM...
"-- OR BURIED 'NEATH THE SOD, WHERE TH' ANGELS WON'T RECEIVE ME --"
..SOMEONE'S SWEET GRANNY IS BAKED IN A PIE AND FED TO HER LOVED ONES.
"-- LET ME GO BOYS, LET ME GO..."
SCARCELY A HAPPY ENDING IN SIGHT.
RIGHT. SO WHO ARE YOU THEN?

THE CROWD-PLEASING, "HAPPILY EVER AFTER" ENDING IS A FAIRLY RECENT INVENTION. EASY MORALS AND ARTIFICIAL SENTIMENT.
SAFE, BLOODLESS AND UTTERLY DISPOSABLE
HARDLY AN IMPROVEMENT, IF YOU ASK ME
BUT THE FACT IS, NEITHER SCHOOL OF THOUGHT GETS IT RIGHT. BOTH OF THEM MISS THE REAL POINT.
SO, WHAT IS THE TRUTH? WHAT'S THE BIG SECRET?
HOW DO FAIRY TALES REALLY END?
THE TRUTH IS... THEY DON'T.
TO BE CONTINUED...

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WYNNION RUINS.
HOWLING INTO THE SWIRLING TEMPEST.. BLOOD RED.. LEAF GREEN...
CROSSING THE GREENSWARD, ADRIFT AMONGST MOTTLED HALF-LIGHT AND VERDANT SHADOWS..
HELP ME... SOMEONE HELP ME... THEY'RE ALL DEAD
SCRATCHING AT THE VEIL WHICH LIES BETWEEN WORLDS.

UGHH. SEVEN SISTERS, WHAT A HANG-OVER.

WHAT THE HELL...

WHO'S...?

THE SHORES OF SORROW

Brian Holguin Story
Jay Anacleto Art Roy A. Martinez Art (Pgs.10-14)
Andy Troy, Alex, Brian Haberlin Color
Dennis Heisler Letters
"Aria" created by
Brian Holguin with Brian Haberlin

GINNY?!

HELP ME!

SHE STEPS FROM SPACE TO SPACE, WHERE WORLDS OVERLAP.

CHASED BY UNSEEN PURSUERS AND HALF-FORGOTTEN GHOSTS.

GWYNNION.

MAD GINNY.

TING
TLING!
KNOCK-KNOCK! HEY, DARIE! YOU UP, LASS? HOW'S YOUR HEAD?
OKAY, GINNY, JUST SLOW DOWN. TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED...
AT THE GREENMAN... THE MOON FEAST. THEY'RE DEAD. ALL O' THEM. THE HARPER, AMAROU, OL' BESSIE...
DEAD? HOW? WHEN?
YESTER-NIGHT... I THINK...I DON'T KNOW. OH, COUSIN, I'M SO SCARED...
JUST CALM DOWN YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
O!!
PUG. HEY. UHM, LOOK [redacted] I'M NOT QUITE SURE WHAT'S [redacted] ON...
WHAT'S IN THE BAG, HUH? YOU BRING ME BREAKFAST?
YEAH, THAT'S IT. BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS. NOTHIN' LIKE A BIG FREAKIN' BOWL O' UGLY MONSTER FLAKES! EAT UP, GIRLS.
THIS IS JUST HOW I WANTED TO START MY DAY.
HEAD THROBBING FROM A NIGHT OF WINE AND DANCING, MY COUSIN SHOWS UP OUT OF NOWHERE, COVERED IN BLOOD, SCREAMING ABOUT [redacted]...
PLOP

A-AAH!
NO...
NOOOOO!
AND JUST WHEN I GET HER CLEANED UP AND HALF-WAY LUCID, THE PUG STROLLS IN AND MANAGES TO SET HER OFF AGAIN.
BRILLIANT! IT TOOK ME TWENTY MINUTES TO GET HER CALMED DOWN. .WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING?!
I COULD STRANGLE HIM.
DUNNO. FOLLOWED ME HOME AND TRIED TO TAKE MY HEAD OFF. ONE FOLLOWED YOU, TOO. I FOUND TRACKS IN THE ALLEY...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
GINNY, HANG ON. IT'S OKAY. JUST RELAX, HONEY...
BUT SOMETHING WEIRD IS DEFINITELY GOING ON. I DON'T LIKE THE SMELL OF IT.
FAERIES... ALWAYS SO TOUCHY.
GWYNNION'S NOT THE CALMEST SOUL UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
THERE'S A REASON WE CALL HER MAD GINNY.
OH, PERFECT.
GET AWAY FROM ME!
HEY, ISN'T THAT--?
YUP. THE BLADE OF THE NIGHT DJINN...
BLOODY BRIGHT THING TO LEAVE OUT IN THE OPEN, GIRLIE...

TWENTY BLOCKS AWAY...
CHILDE ROLAND, PRINCE OF THE LESSER BOULEVARDS, AWAKENS.
I GOTTA JET. MY FATHER'S GONNA FREAK.
FATHERS ALWAYS DO.
LISTEN. WHAT YOU SAID IN THE CLUB LAST NIGHT...THAT STUFF ABOUT BEING, LIKE, AN ELF OR SOMETHING... WERE YOU SERIOUS?
HALF-ELF. ON MY FATHER'S SIDE. FAERIE WOMAN CAN'T HAVE CHILDREN ANYMORE. OR VERY RARELY, ANYWAY.
HAHA. YOU'RE WEIRD. BUT IN A GOOD WAY. I LIKE YOU.
WAIT. I HAVE A PRESENT FOR YOU. A LITTLE POEM...
I LOVE IT.
OH WOW. IT'S ON A REAL LEAF AND EVERYTHING. DID YOU REALLY WRITE IT?
MMM-HMM.
THANKS. FOR EVERYTHING. BYE!

AS I WAS GOIN' OV-ER, THE CARK-IN-KARAH MOUNTAIN... I SPIED ON CAPTAIN FAR-REL, AND HIS MONEY HE WAS COUNTIN'..
GROVE
I FIRST PRODUCED MY PIS-TOL, AND THEN PRODUCED MY RAPIER... I SAID, "STAND AND DEL-I-VER OR THE DEVIL, HE MAY TAKE YOU..."
SO, DO YOU LIKE IT, ANGELINE?
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, HONEY. HAUNTING. I HAD A DREAM JUST LIKE IT THE OTHER NIGHT.
GREAT. THAT'S FOR BREAKFAST, THEN?
YOU GOT IT.
SLOW BUSINESS TODAY, EH, FELLAS?
HMM WHAT'S THAT, THEN? WHERE?

OKAY, SO WHERE WERE WE? MADNESS, VIOLENCE AND UNEXPECTED VISITORS ALL BEFORE 10 A.M.
NOT A GREAT MORNING
HOW YOU FEELING, HON? LOOK, PUG'S REAL SORRY HE HAD TO HIT YOU AND ALL...
IT'S OKAY.
PRETTY.. I HAD ONE OF THESE WHEN I WAS A GIRL. YOUR FATHER GAVE IT TO ME, [illegible]
YEAH, I REMEMBER.
YOU JUST LAY DOWN AND GET SOME REST NOW. ME AND PUG WILL FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT. PROMISE.
I WONDER IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH COUNT ISLIS PASSING THROUGH TOWN. NOT REALLY HIS STYLE THOUGH. NO PANACHE.
AND SPEAKING OF PANACHE...
HUL-LO KILDARE! AIN'T I A PRETTY BEASTIE? GIVE US A KISS, AWRIGHT?
CUTE, PUG. YOU'RE A HUGE HELP, YOU KNOW THAT?
SO WHAT IN SEVEN HELLS IS GOING ON? YOU SAY THIS THING FOLLOWED YOU?
YEAH. IT TRAILED US FROM DIONE. I WAITED TILL YOU WERE HOME SAFE, AND THEN ME AND CUDDLES HERE HAD A BIT OF A FACE OFF.
I WON.
BZZZT
HEY, KILDY! YOU READY?
WHO IS IT? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
IT'S ME, ONDINE. OPEN UP!

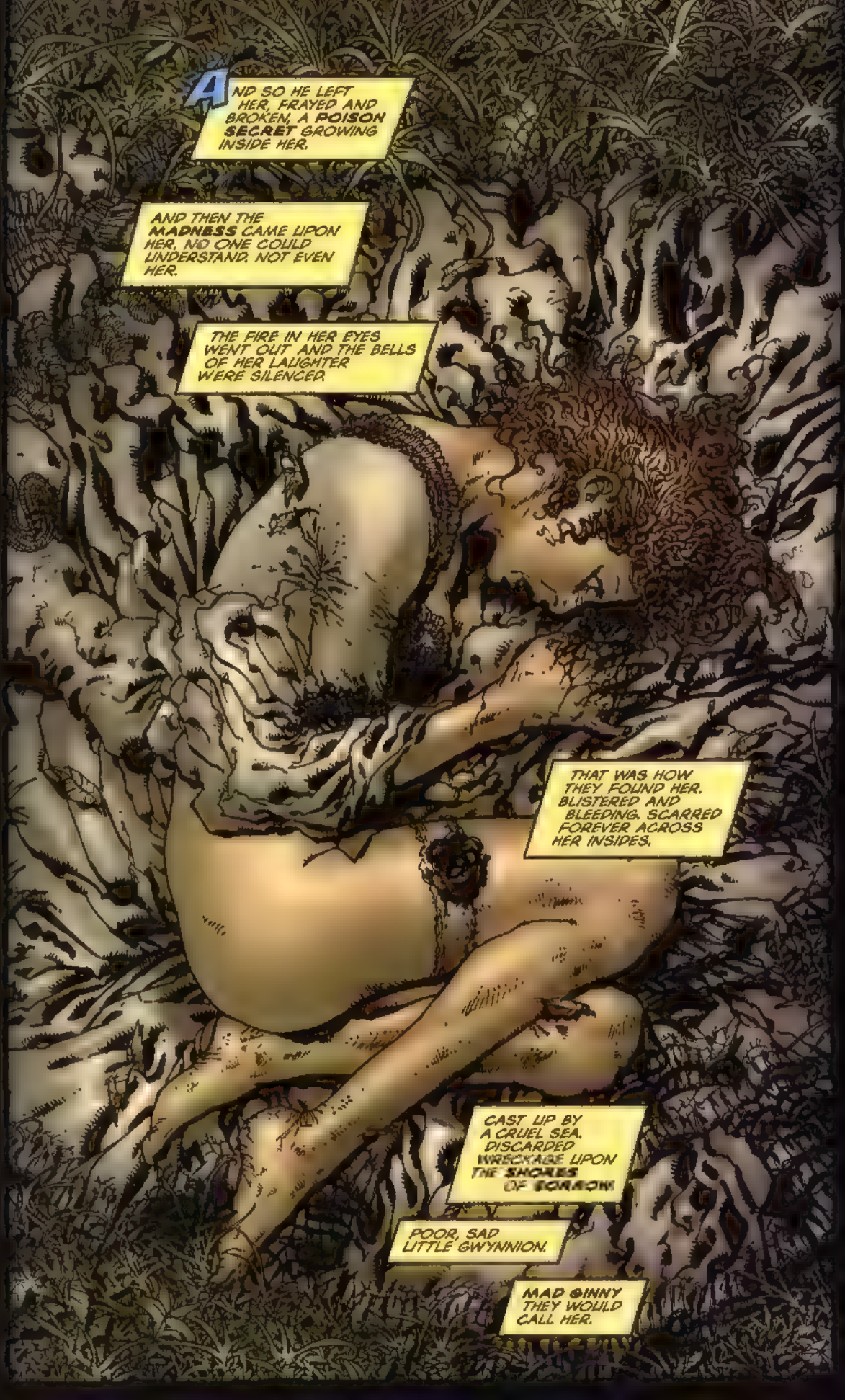
ONDINE. SHOOT. I FORGOT. WE WERE MEANT TO GO SHOPPING TODAY.
LET ME IN, IT'S COLD OUT HERE.
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU'RE NOT EVEN DRESSED YET. AND YOUR HAIR...
CHANGE OF PLANS, GIRLFRIEND. THINGS ARE A BIT COMPLICATED RIGHT NOW...
COMPLICATED? COMPLICATED HOW?
WELL...
WHAT'LL IT BE GIRLS? A WING, OR A THIGH?
SO ANYWAY, THAT'S ABOUT ALL WE KNOW. GINNY'S UPSTAIRS SLEEPING. AS FOR WHAT EXACTLY PUG IS DOING, I COULDN'T TELL YOU.
HEY MARTHA STEWART! I HOPE YOU'RE RUINING MY HENKEL KNIFE SET FOR A GOOD REASON.
GOD, IT'S SO HORRIBLE WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS?
I MEAN, I KNEW A COUPLE [redacted] BACK IN PRAGUE, BUT THEY WEREN'T NEAR UGLY AS THAT.
HAH! OUR LITTLE FRIEND HAS A [redacted]!

"LISTEN, ONDINE, DO ME A BIG FAVOR AND KEEP AN EYE ON GINNY. WE'RE GONNA GO SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND OUT ABOUT THIS MESS."
"OKAY. NO PROBLEM. DOES SHE NEED ANYTHING?"
"NO. SHE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT. JUST LET HER SLEEP."
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A LADY FAIR...

A GOLDEN CHILD OF A GOLDEN AGE, HER EYES DANCED LIKE DISTANT FIRES, AND HER LAUGHTER RANG LIKE A HUNDRED GLASS BELLS.
GWYNNION THE BRIGHT, THEY CALLED HER. PROUD DAUGHTER OF THE FAR LANDS.
SHE WAS BOLD AND DARING. FEARLESS.
WITH HER COUSIN, KILDARE, SHE WOULD VENTURE INTO THE REALMS OF MAN. MANY WERE THE HEARTS THEY BROKE WITH A CARELESS GLANCE, OR A SUBTLE WORD.
ONE SMILE AND AN ENTIRE COURT WOULD BE ENCHANTED. ONE REBUKE, AND EMPIRES WOULD GO TO WAR.
BUT THE WORLD BEGAN TO CHANGE.

THE AGE OF STONE AND SOD GAVE WAY TO AN AGE OF IRON AND STEAM.
SCIENCE USURPED IMAGINATION, AND THE OLD WAYS BEGAN TO DIE.
BUT THE WORLD, MUCH AS IT HAD CHANGED, STILL HAD WOLVES IN IT.

THERE ARE SUCH WOLVES THAT HIDE THEIR TEETH BEHIND FLASHING SMILES. WHO WEAR THEIR BRISTLES ON THE INSIDE.
CRUEL BEASTS WHO WOULD LURE A FOOLISH GIRL INTO THE WOODS AND MAKE A MEAL OF HER.
INTO A DARKENED WOOD HE STOLE HER, AND TORE AT HER FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
HE BURROWED IN THE DARK WARMTH OF HER, MADE DRUNK BY THE SCENT OF HER HOT BLOOD.
SHE RAN SCREAMING INTO THE NIGHT, BUT COULD NOT GET AWAY.
HE DEVOURED HER.


AND SO HE LEFT HER, FRAYED AND BROKEN, A POISON SECRET GROWING INSIDE HER.
AND THEN THE MADNESS CAME UPON HER. NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND. NOT EVEN HER.
THE FIRE IN HER EYES WENT OUT AND THE BELLS OF HER LAUGHTER WERE SILENCED.
THAT WAS HOW THEY FOUND HER. BLISTERED AND BLEEDING. SCARRED FOREVER ACROSS HER INSIDES.
CAST UP BY A CRUEL SEA. DISCARDED WRECKAGE UPON THE SHORES OF SORROW.
POOR, SAD LITTLE GWYNNION.
MAD GINNY THEY WOULD CALL HER.

MEANWHILE.
OKAY.. WHERE NOW?
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE?
SQUAWK
HMM. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE IT MEANS?
WELL, YOU'RE NO HELP, ARE YOU?
SQUAWK
BETTER STAND BACK, LITTLE FELLAH.

FIGURED THE BEST PLACE TO START WAS WITH THE SPHINX. GET SOME IDEA WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.
KNOCK
HE'S AN ODD ONE, THAT'S FOR SURE. A COMPLETE MYSTERY, EVEN TO ME.
I HAVE NO CLUE HOW OLD HE IS OR WHERE HE CAME FROM. FOR ALL I KNOW, HE'S THE ONLY ONE OF HIS KIND.
HE HAS A UNIQUE GIFT FOR PUZZLES, RIDDLES, CODES, POSERS, CIPHERS, SEALS. YOU NAME IT, HE CAN CRACK IT.
HE KEEPS TO HIMSELF, MOSTLY. NOT EXACTLY [redacted] BUT HE'S ALWAYS TREATED ME [redacted].
COME IN, LADY KILDARE.

WELCOME AND TO YOU TOO, [illegible]IR PUG.
I KNOW YOU DON'T GET OUT MUCH, SO WE BROUGHT YOU SOME CHINESE.
AYE.
SPLENDID.
SO, LISTEN, WE NEED YOUR HELP...
OF COURSE.
CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THIS IS?
[illegible] FIRST THINGS FIRST, KILDARE, YOU KNOW THE CONTRACT...

RIGHT. A BOON FOR A BOON. A RIDDLE FOR A RIDDLE.
OKAY, THIS IS A GOOD ONE. YOU'LL LIKE IT.
AHEM! KNOCK-KNOCK!
HMMM... LET'S SEE... "KNOCK-KNOCK"!? AH! WHO IS THERE?
THE INTERRUPTING COW.
MOOOOOO
"--ING COW WHO?"
MOST UNUSUAL. WELL, LET ME SEE. I BELEVE THE PROPER RESPONSE WOULD BE, "THE INTER-RUPT--"
MMM... "MOO." YES... YES...
I LIKE IT.

NOW, LET ME SEE...AH. IT IS A SCROLL. ONE MUST TURN THE CYLINDERS IN PROPER COMBINATION TO OPEN IT.
IT NO DOUBT CONTAINS A SPELL. A NAME MOST LIKELY.
A NAMING SPELL, HUH? THAT'S STRONG STUFF.
YES. IT IS THE OLDEST FORM OF MAGIC. TO NAME A THING IS TO DEFINE IT. TO DEFINE A THING IS TO CONTROL IT. "IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE WORD..."
ANY IDEA WHERE IT CAME FROM? I'VE NEVER SEEN THESE MARKINGS BEFORE.
I AM NOT A HISTORIAN, KILDARE.
HERE. I HAVE ALIGNED THE CHAMBERS. TWIST THE BASE CLOCKWISE AND IT WILL OPEN.
BUT NOT HERE. DO IT SOMEWHERE SAFE, IF YOU CHOSE TO OPEN IT AT ALL
GOTCHA.
THANKS A LOT. ENJOY THE PEA-PODS.
CHEERS.

ENGLAND.
...FOR A STUNNING 3-1 VICTORY OVER HEAVILY FAVORED MANCHESTER.
IN OTHER NEWS, POLICE ARE STILL SEARCHING FOR NIGEL HAWTHORNE, WHO ESCAPED FROM A JAIL CELL IN COTSWALDS LATE YESTERDAY. TWO GUARDS WERE VICIOUSLY STABBED DURING THAT EPISODE.
HAWTHORNE HAD BEEN DETAINED AT THE JAIL ON CHARGES OF DISTURBING THE PEACE, PENDING A COMPETENCY HEARING.
HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED WHILST CAUSING A COMMOTION IN THE HIGH STREET, REPORTEDLY ISSUING THREATS AND WARNINGS ABOUT "GOBLINS AND FAIRIES."
POLICE HAVE ISSUED A WARNING THAT MR. HAWTHORNE IS CONSIDERED DANGEROUS AND POSSIBLY ARMED.
ANYONE WITH INFORMATION REGARDING HIS WHEREABOUTS SHOULD CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES IMMEDIATELY.
AND THAT'S THE NEWS THIS EVENING. I'M NEVILLE WEAKES. WE NOW RETURN TO THE BBC LIGHT PROGRAMME...
THERE, LAD. NO TROUBLES, OKAY?
NO SUCH LUCK, I'M AFRAID NOT TODAY, LUV.
POLICE

NEW YORK.
SO LET'S SUM UP, SHALL WE? NAMELESS EVIL HUNTING DOWN AND SLAUGHTERING MY KINSMEN...
A MYSTERIOUS, SEVERED HEAD ROTTING IN THE KITCHEN SINK...
AN EMOTIONALLY SCARRED COUSIN IN THE MIDST OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN...
AND A SPELL OF UNKNOWN PROPERTIES SITTING LIKE A GRENADE IN MY COAT POCKET. THAT ABOUT COVER IT?
SO YOU GOTTA THINK, THINGS CAN'T GET ANY WORSE, RIGHT?
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS I HAVE, YOU LEARN A FEW THINGS.
FOR STARTERS, NEVER SAY NEVER.
TO BE CONTINUED...

AVALON · STUDIOS
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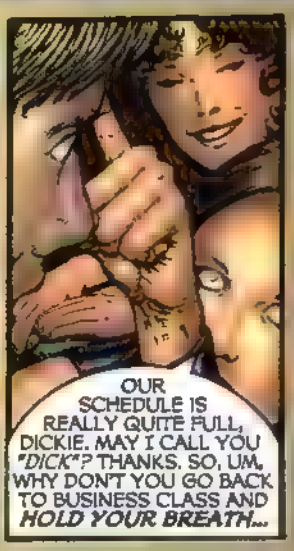
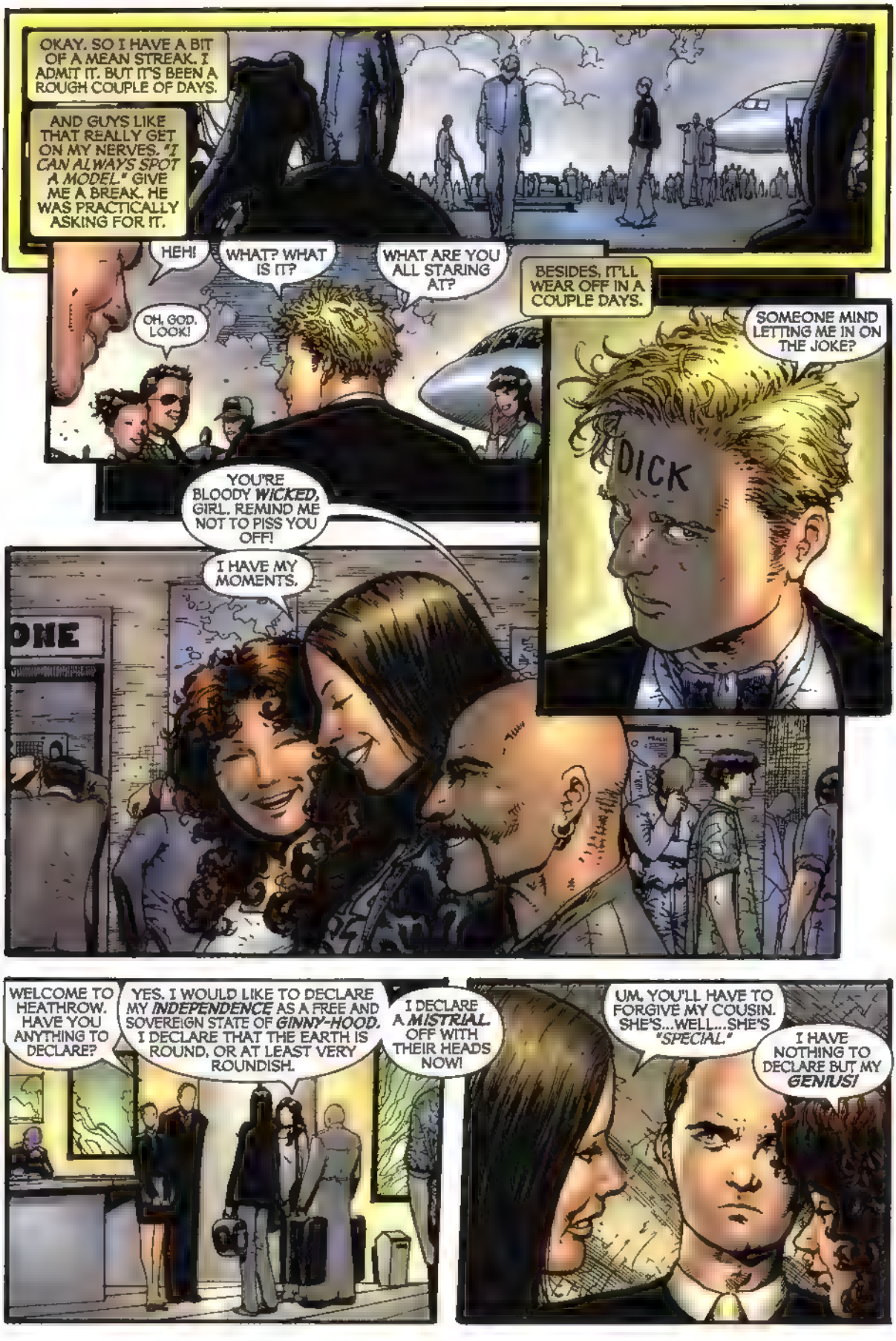
JUST YESTERDAY, GINNY WAS STANDING AT THE EDGE OF MY ROOF, THREATENING TO KILL HERSELF. NOW SHE WON'T STOP SINGING. THAT'S GINNY FOR YOU.
SOMETHING HAPPENED IN ENGLAND. SOMETHING BAD. GINNY SHOWED UP IN MY GARDEN, COVERED IN BLOOD. ANSWERS WERE PRETTY SCARCE.
SO NOW ME, GINNY AND PUG ARE ONBOARD ONE OF MR. BRANSON'S FINEST, WINGING OUR WAY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.
I HAVE A FEELING IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TRIP.
I'M FLYING! LOOK AT ME, WAY UP HIGH, SUDDENLY HERE AM I! I'M FLYYYING!

HI, LOVES.
ARE YOU AMERICAN? NO? YOU'RE MODELS, I BET. I CAN ALWAYS SPOT A MODEL.

MY FIRM WORKS WITH A LOT OF MODELS. FASTEST GROWING P.R. AGENCY IN LONDON, IF I MIGHT BOAST.

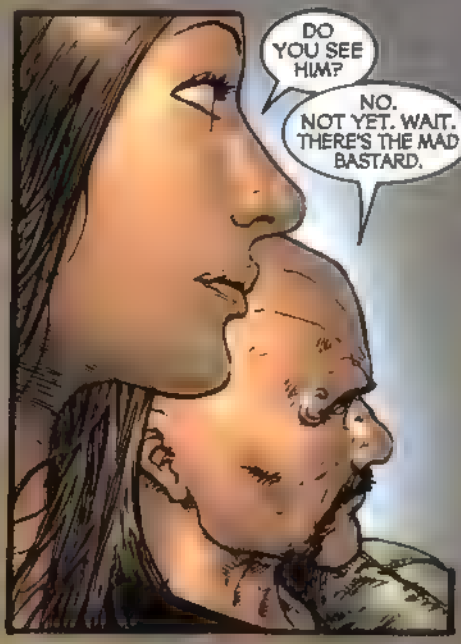
BY THE WAY, MY NAME IS DICKIE. MAY I SIT? THANKS. SO WHERE ARE YOU STAYING. YOU REALLY MUST LET ME SHOW YOU 'ROUND...

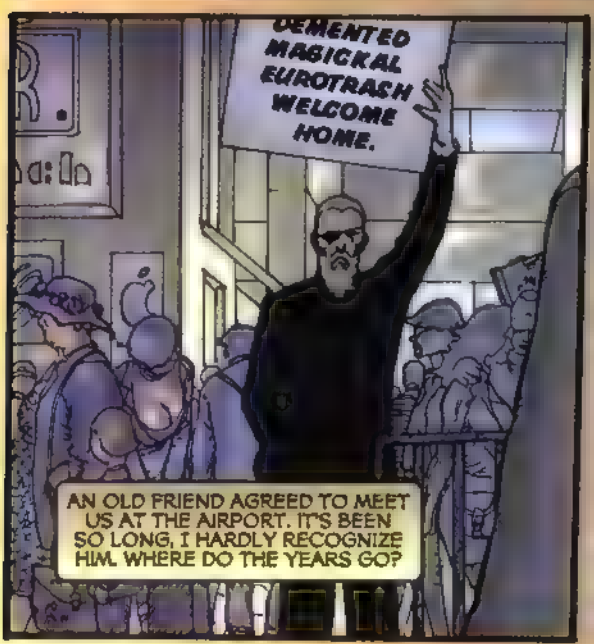

OUR SCHEDULE IS REALLY QUITE FULL, DICKIE. MAY I CALL YOU "DICK"? THANKS. SO, UM, WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO BUSINESS CLASS AND HOLD YOUR BREATH...

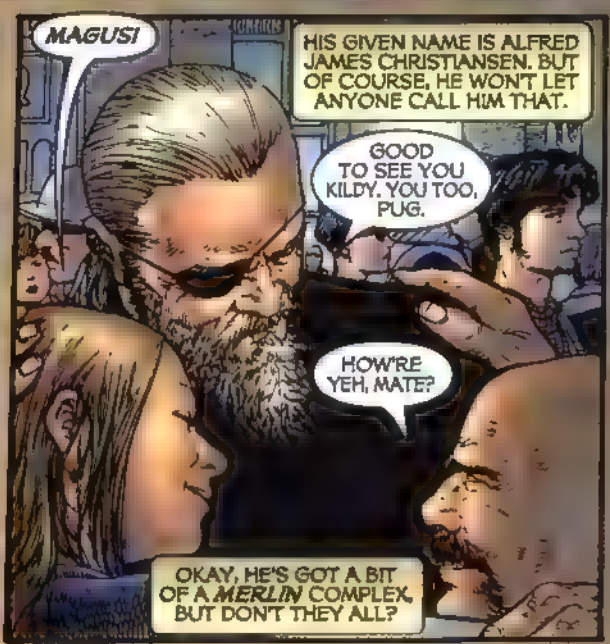

OKAY. SO I HAVE A BIT OF A MEAN STREAK. I ADMIT IT. BUT IT'S BEEN A ROUGH COUPLE OF DAYS.
AND GUYS LIKE THAT REALLY GET ON MY NERVES. "I CAN ALWAYS SPOT A MODEL." GIVE ME A BREAK. HE WAS PRACTICALLY ASKING FOR IT.
HEH!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
WHAT ARE YOU ALL STARING AT?
OH, GOD. LOOK!
BESIDES, IT'LL WEAR OFF IN A COUPLE DAYS.
SOMEONE MIND LETTING ME IN ON THE JOKE?
DICK
YOU'RE BLOODY WICKED, GIRL. REMIND ME NOT TO PISS YOU OFF!
I HAVE MY MOMENTS.
ONE
WELCOME TO HEATHROW. HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?
YES. I WOULD LIKE TO DECLARE MY INDEPENDENCE AS A FREE AND SOVEREIGN STATE OF GINNY-HOOD. I DECLARE THAT THE EARTH IS ROUND, OR AT LEAST VERY ROUNDISH.
I DECLARE A MISTRIAL. OFF WITH THEIR HEADS NOW!
UM. YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE MY COUSIN. SHE'S...WELL...SHE'S "SPECIAL."
I HAVE NOTHING TO DECLARE BUT MY GENIUS!

I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE'S LEAVING, OR WHERE SHE'S GONNA GO...I GUESS SHE'S GOT HER REASONS BUT I JUST DON'T WANNA KNOW...
...BUT FOR TWENTY-FOUR YEARS I'VE BEEN LIVING NEXT DOOR TO ALICE...
ONE, TWO THREE, FOUR... I DECLARE A THUMB WAR.
BRITAIN ISLE of MYSTERY

ALICE... ALICE... WHO THE F—
HERE YOU GO. DO YOU KNOW "HERE COMES THE SUN"?
STREWTH! THAT'S GOLD, IS IT?
IT IS NOW! ENJOY!


DO YOU SEE HIM?
NO. NOT YET. WAIT. THERE'S THE MAD BASTARD.


DEMENTED MAGICKAL EUROTRASH WELCOME HOME.
AN OLD FRIEND AGREED TO MEET US AT THE AIRPORT. IT'S BEEN SO LONG, I HARDLY RECOGNIZE HIM. WHERE DO THE YEARS GO?


MAGUS!
HIS GIVEN NAME IS ALFRED JAMES CHRISTIANSEN. BUT OF COURSE, HE WON'T LET ANYONE CALL HIM THAT.
GOOD TO SEE YOU KILDY. YOU TOO, PUG.
HOW'RE YEH, MATE?
OKAY, HE'S GOT A BIT OF A MERLIN COMPLEX, BUT DON'T THEY ALL?

HE CALLS HIMSELF *MAGNUS MAGUS* NOW. BUT HE'S STILL SPOTTY OLD ALFIE TO ME. WE HAVE A LONG RIDE AHEAD OF US. SO I DO MY BEST TO FILL HIM IN.

. . SO THAT'S ABOUT ALL WE KNOW. WE STILL HAVE THE SCROLL, BUT I'M A BIT AFRAID TO OPEN IT UNTIL WE GET MORE DETAILS.

THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL THE HELP, MAGUS. I FIGURED IT WOULD BE SAFER TRAVELING BY MUNDANE MEANS, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

TA.

ARE WE THERE YET?

NO.

ARE WE THERE YET?

NO, NOT YET.

I HAVE TO PEE.

ARE WE THERE YET?

ALMOST, HONEY.

Welcome to the Home of Faeries.

YOU'RE ALMOST *HOME.*

Homecoming

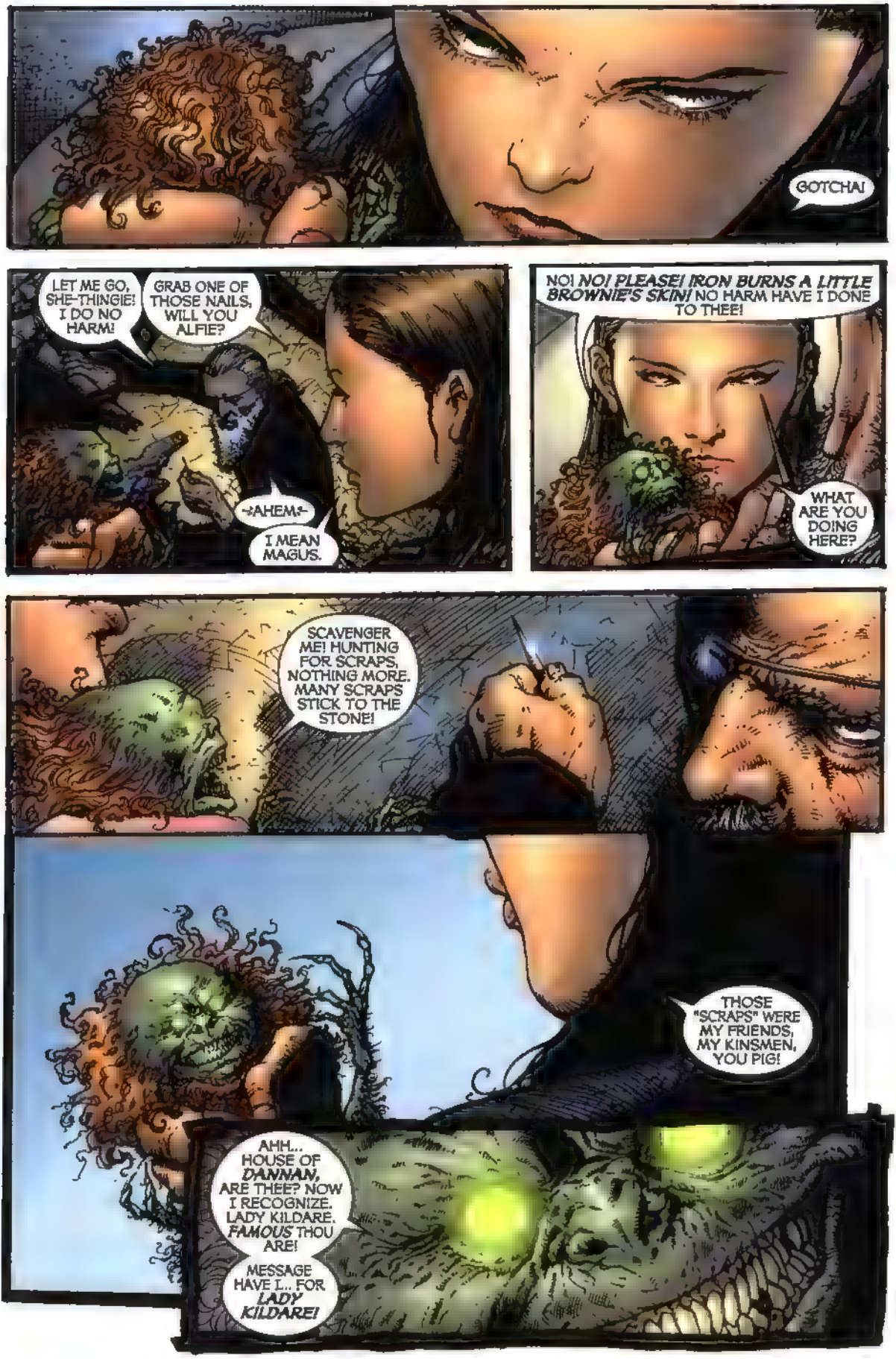
Brian Holguin STORY
Roy A. Martinez ART

Avalon Studios' Andy Troy COLORS
Richard Starkings and Comicraft's Liz Agraphiotis LETTERING
Patsy Cross EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE
ARIA CREATED BY Brian Holguin WITH Brian Haberlin

SO SOMETIMES, Y'KNOW, I GOTTA ASK MYSELF, "HAWTHORNE, OUL' MATE, HOW D'YEH GET YOURSELF IN THESE SPOTS?"
I MEAN, IT'S NOT EXACTLY BEEN A COZY CUPPA, PREPARING FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE DARK ONE. S'A BIG RESPONSIBILITY, LET'S BE HONEST.
AND THAT'S NOT EVEN TO MENTION BREAKING OUT OF JAIL, DODGING THE POLICE, KILLING THE ODD MOTORIST... IT'S ENOUGH TO DRIVE YOU TO DRINK. NO OFFENSE, EH?
I'LL TELL YOU THIS FOR FREE...
...CLEARING THE WAY FOR ARMAGEDDON...
...IT CAN BE BLOODY HARD WORK. MAKE NO MISTAKE.
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT WILL ALL BE OVER SOON. THEN WE CAN ALL REST EASY, LUCIF.
ALL RIGHT, SO PUT THAT LAST ROUND ON ME TAB THEN.
IT WAS GOOD CHATTING. IT'S GOOD TO GET THINGS OFF THE CHEST. YOU RUN A SQUARE PUB, MATE. CHEERS!

THE GREENMAN PUB. THIS IS WHERE GINNY STUMBLED UPON THE MASSACRE.
CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTIO
I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE HALF A CENTURY, BUT I TELL YOU, MARCUS AND BESS WERE GOOD PEOPLE. ALWAYS TREATED MY KIND WELL. THEY DIDN'T DESERVED TO END LIKE THIS.
WE LEAVE GINNY TO WAIT IN THE CAR. THE LESS SHE HAST TO DEAL WITH THIS, THE BETTER.
IF YOU NEED ANTHING AT ALL, JUST SHOUT, OKAY? WE'RE JUST GOING TO BE INSIDE.
UH HUH.
WELL, HULLO THERE, LORD CROKER! DID YOU MISS YOU'RE GINNY-GIRL, DID YOU? GUESS WHAT? I HAVE A SECRET. YES, I DO. AND IT'S A BIG ONE!
NO, I CAN'T TELL YOU. THAT'S JUST THE WAY SECRETS WORK. YOU DON'T TELL ANYONE.
WELL, I SUPPOSE I CAN TELL, IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO REPEAT IT...

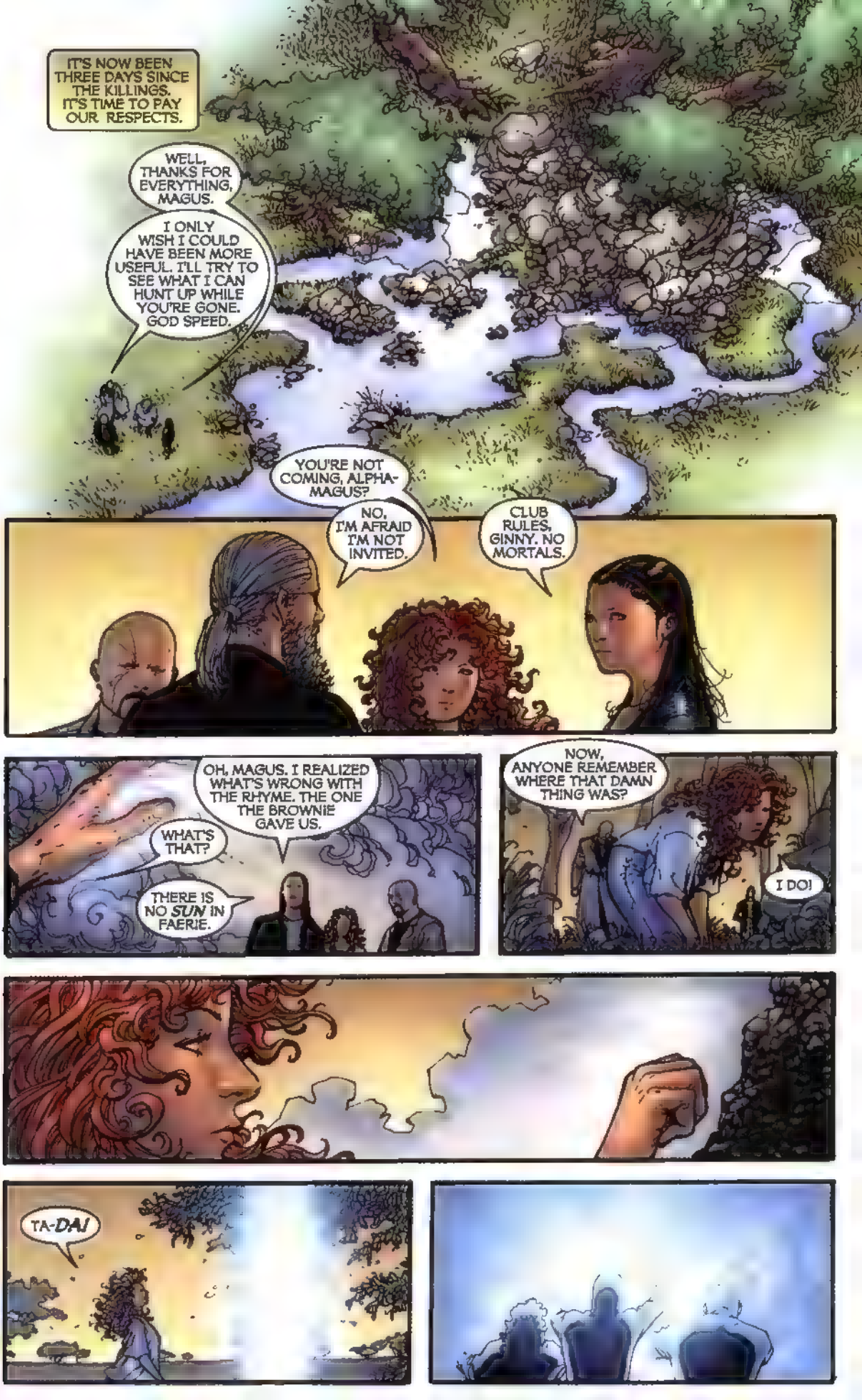
ONLY TWO BODY OUTLINES. THAT MEANS THAT FAIR FOLK WERE CLEARED OUT BEFORE THE POLICE ARRIVED.
THIS IS A BLOODY MESS. WHATEVER DID THIS WAS SURE A VISCOUS LITTLE BEASTIE.
THERE'S STILL MAGICK HERE. SMALL, SUBTLE. BUT HERE.
IS IT JUST ME, OR DO YOU GET THE FEELING THAT WE'RE --
NOT ALONE?
AH HAH! THERE, IN THE CORNER.
BEEP

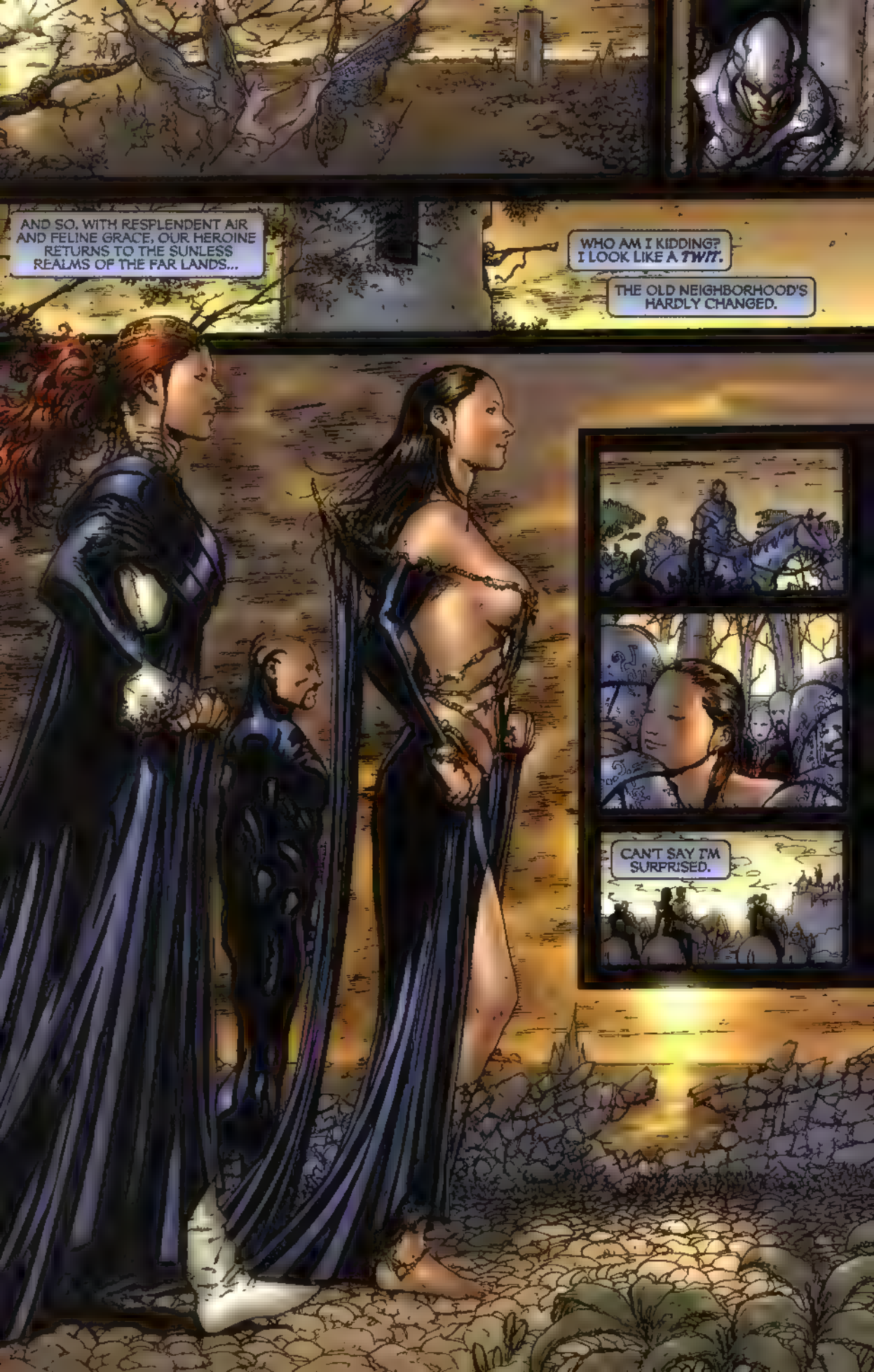

GOTCHA!
LET ME GO, SHE-THINGIE! I DO NO HARM!
GRAB ONE OF THOSE NAILS, WILL YOU ALFIE?
-AHEM.-
I MEAN MAGUS.
NO! NO! PLEASE! IRON BURNS A LITTLE BROWNIE'S SKIN! NO HARM HAVE I DONE TO THEE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SCAVENGER ME! HUNTING FOR SCRAPS, NOTHING MORE. MANY SCRAPS STICK TO THE STONE!
THOSE "SCRAPS" WERE MY FRIENDS, MY KINSMEN, YOU PIG!
AHH... HOUSE OF DANNAN, ARE THEE? NOW I RECOGNIZE. LADY KILDARE. FAMOUS THOU ARE!
MESSAGE HAVE I... FOR LADY KILDARE!

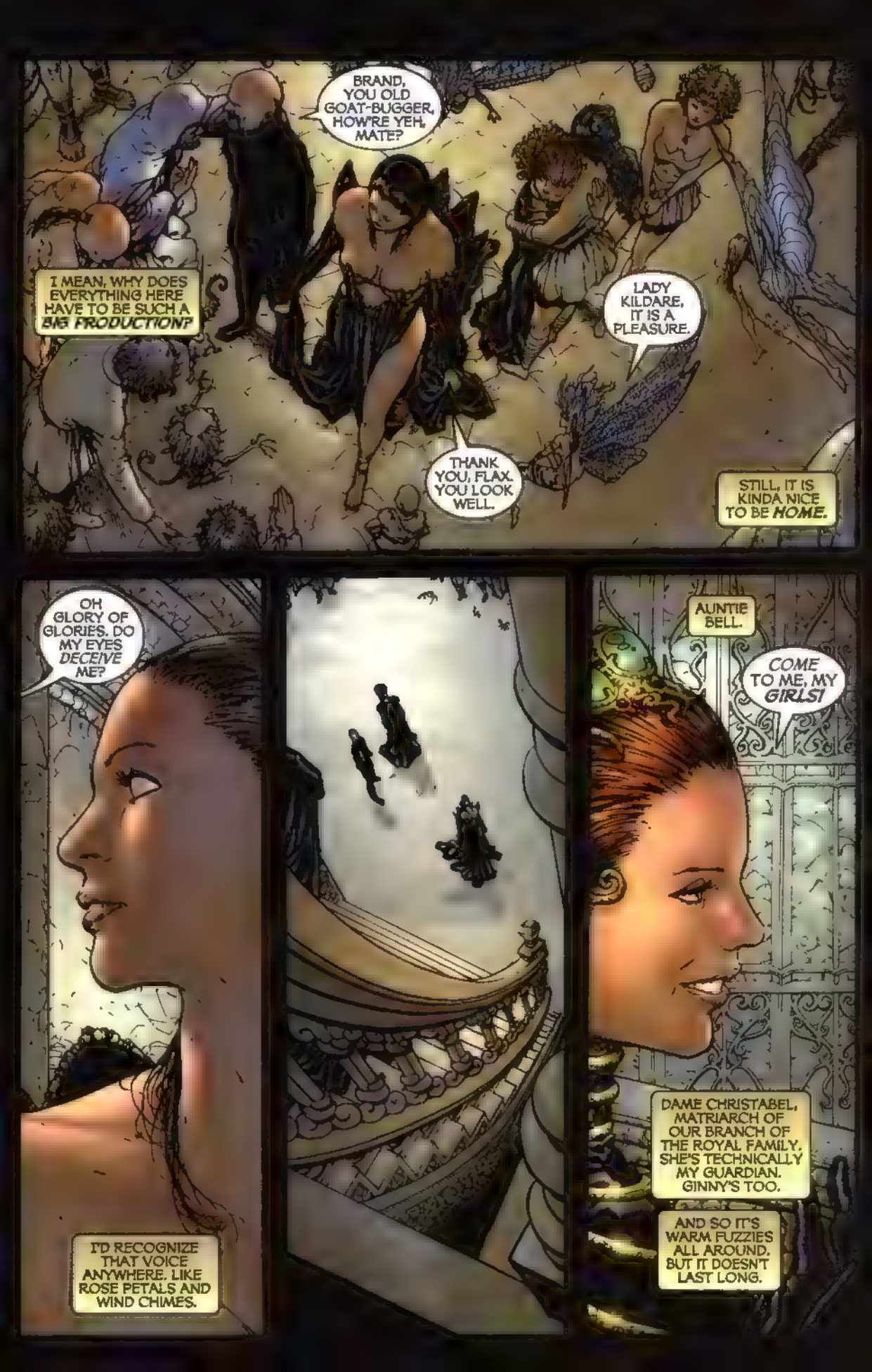
CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK WOODS CAME.
HE STEPS THROUGH DRAPES OF MIST... MOVES BENEATH DARK CANOPIES OF NIGHT... COLD REALITIES SHIFTING BENEATH HIS FEET...
TARA..?
¿SNFF!?
TARA?
HOLD ON. DON'T MOVE.
HOW... HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
IT'S A GIFT. FROM MY FATHER'S SIDE.
SEVEN HELLS, WHAT HAPPENED?
IT WAS TERRIBLE. IT WAS. . WHAT THEY DID TO ME.
WHO? TARA, WHO DID THIS?
I THINK... I THINK THEY THOUGHT I WAS ONE OF YOU...

ENGLAND.
"THE HOUSE OF DANNAN ERE SHALL FALL, BROKEN ONE BY ONE, AND RISING FROM ITS ASHEN PALL, A NEW AND DARKER SUN.."
AS CRYPTIC MESSAGES GO, IT'S NOT REALLY ALL THAT HELPFUL IS IT?
I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND LIKE A TV DETECTIVE, BUT WHO WOULD WANT REVENGE ON THE ROYAL FAMILY? WHO WOULD HAVE A MOTIVE?
WHO WOULDN'T? LET'S FACE IT. THEY'RE A BUNCH OF SNOTTY, ARISTOCRATIC PONCES. I MEAN THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THEIR JOB.
YOU COULD EASILY STRETCH A LINE OF BRUISED EGOS FROM AVALON TO THE VELVET MARCHES, BUT NO ONE WHO WOULD DO THIS.
SO WE'RE BACK TO ZERO. YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME *POP* LITTLE BROWNIE'S EYES OUT. THEN HE'D *TALK.*
OH, *LOOK!* THERE'S THYME... AND PEONY... AND ROSEMARY... ALL MY FRIENDS. HULLO! OH, I *LOVE* GARDENING SHOWS...

SO WHAT ABOUT THE SCROLL? ANY THOUGHTS ON THAT, MAGUS?
MY GUESS IS IT'S AN ANIMATING SPELL.
PLACED IN THE MOUTH OF A SIMULACRUM — AND GOD KNOWS WHAT THAT THING WAS MADE OF — IT GIVES LIFE TO FORM. THE CREATURE IS A MERE EXTENSION OF ITS MASTER.
PLEASE! THESEUS WAS A SELF-ABSORBED, MISOGYNISTIC PRICK. ARIADNE SHOULD HAVE HAD HIS BALLS ON A PLATE. BUT WHAT CAN I SAY? SOME CHICKS NEVER LEARN.
OUCH!
SORRY, I GET CRANKY WHEN I'M TIRED. I'M GONNA GO CRASH NOW. G'NIGHT.
AND SO THE FINAL JEOPARDY QUESTION REMAINS: WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS?
WELL, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW THE STRINGS THEN, WON'T WE? TRACE OUR WAY THROUGH THE LABYRINTH, LIKE THESEUS OF OLD.


IT'S NOW BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE THE KILLINGS. IT'S TIME TO PAY OUR RESPECTS.
WELL, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, MAGUS.
I ONLY WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN MORE USEFUL. I'LL TRY TO SEE WHAT I CAN HUNT UP WHILE YOU'RE GONE. GOD SPEED.
YOU'RE NOT COMING, ALPHA-MAGUS?
NO, I'M AFRAID I'M NOT INVITED.
CLUB RULES, GINNY. NO MORTALS.
OH, MAGUS. I REALIZED WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE RHYME. THE ONE THE BROWNIE GAVE US.
WHAT'S THAT?
THERE IS NO *SUN* IN FAERIE.
NOW, ANYONE REMEMBER WHERE THAT DAMN THING WAS?
I DO!
TA-*DA!*


AND SO, WITH RESPLENDENT AIR AND FELINE GRACE, OUR HEROINE RETURNS TO THE SUNLESS REALMS OF THE FAR LANDS...
WHO AM I KIDDING? I LOOK LIKE A *TWIT.*
THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD'S HARDLY CHANGED.
CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED.


BRAND, YOU OLD GOAT-BUGGER. HOW'RE YEH, MATE?
I MEAN, WHY DOES EVERYTHING HERE HAVE TO BE SUCH A BIG PRODUCTION?
LADY KILDARE, IT IS A PLEASURE.
THANK YOU, FLAX. YOU LOOK WELL.
STILL, IT IS KINDA NICE TO BE HOME.
OH GLORY OF GLORIES. DO MY EYES DECEIVE ME?
I'D RECOGNIZE THAT VOICE ANYWHERE. LIKE ROSE PETALS AND WIND CHIMES.
AUNTIE BELL.
COME TO ME, MY GIRLS!
DAME CHRISTABEL, MATRIARCH OF OUR BRANCH OF THE ROYAL FAMILY. SHE'S TECHNICALLY MY GUARDIAN. GINNY'S TOO.
AND SO IT'S WARM FUZZIES ALL AROUND. BUT IT DOESN'T LAST LONG.

I HAVE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

A FAERIE FUNERAL.

HOW DO YOU SAY YOUR FINAL GOOD-BYES TO PEOPLE WHO WERE NEVER MEANT TO *DIE?*

YOU DON'T EVEN CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY. YOU PART WAYS WITH FRIENDS, LOVERS... LEAVE ARGUMENTS UNRESOLVED... ALWAYS ASSUMING YOU'LL SEE THEM AGAIN.

WE MOVE IN SILENT, SOMBER WAVES, INCHING PAST THE LIFELESS BODIES.

AND THEN WE SING. WITH ONE VOICE. AN ANCIENT, WORDLESS SONG THAT'S OLDER THAN THE RACE OF MAN.

WE FEEL THIS LOSS IN OUR BONES. NO ONE CAN REMEMBER THE LAST TIME A FULL BLOOD FAERIE CHILD WAS BORN.

THERE'S A FEW LESS STARS IN OUR FIRMAMENT NOW.

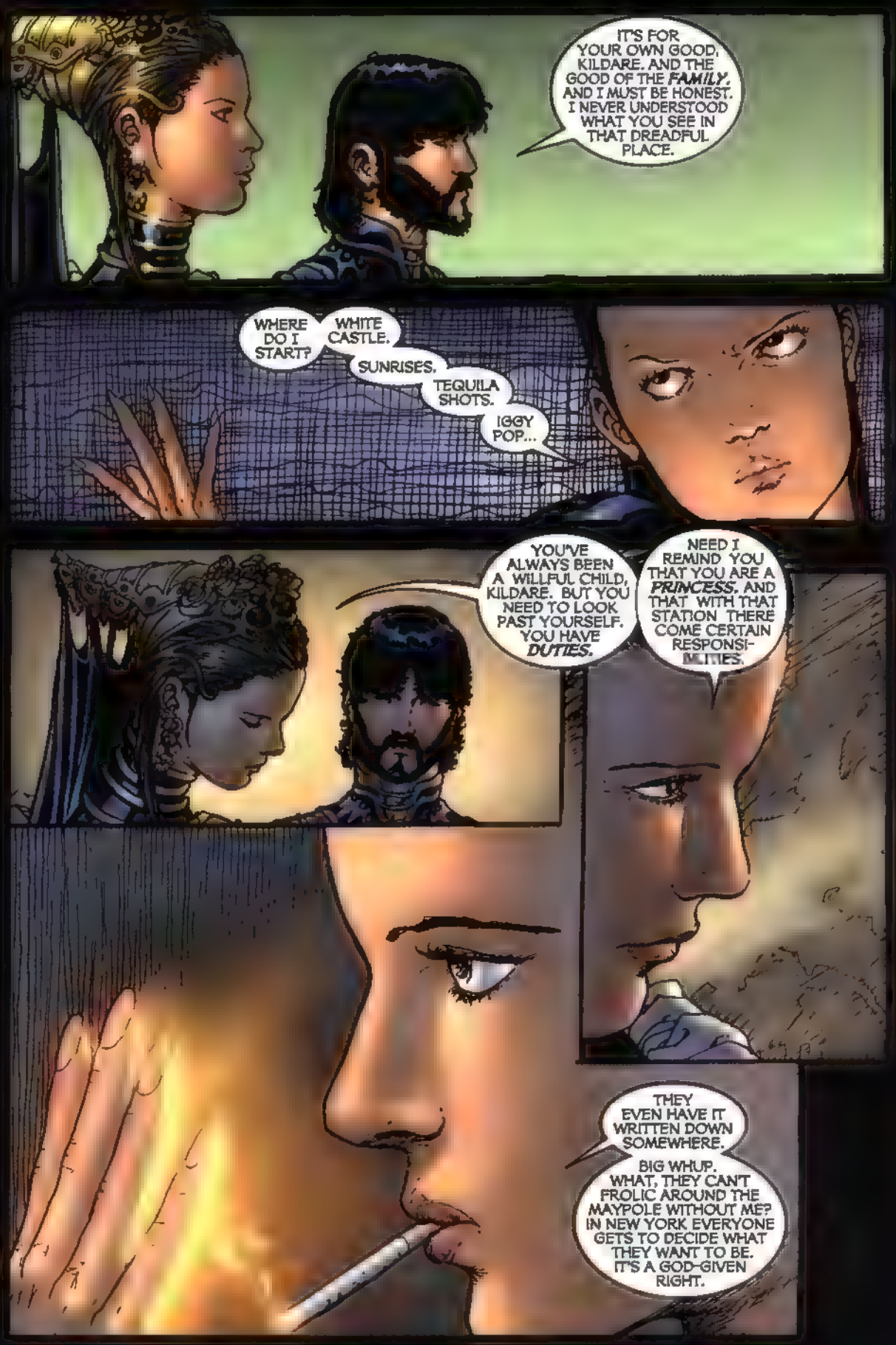
ASHES FLOAT UP INTO THE SKY, GLITTERING FIREFLY SPARKS OF LIGHT, RETURNING MY KINSMEN TO THE *AIR* FROM WHICH THEY WERE BORN.

NO ONE SPEAKS. NO ONE SAYS A WORD. ASK NOT FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS...

AND WE ARE ALL DIMINISHED.

OKAY, TARA, I WANT YOU TO LOOK AT ME. I'M GOING TO GO GET HELP. I WANT YOU TO WAIT HERE.
NO. DON'T LEAVE...
IT'LL BE OKAY... TRUST ME.
HERE. DRINK THIS. IT'LL HELP YOU REST.
OKAY, GOLDEN RULE HERE. DON'T STEP OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE.
NO MATTER WHO COMES BY, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY, NO MATTER WHAT THEY MIGHT PROMISE OR WHAT THREATS THEY MIGHT MAKE...
ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS —
STAY IN THE CIRCLE. I GOT IT.
GOOD GIRL. I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I CAN.

AFTER THE [redacted] AUNTIE BELL AND UNCLE ANGUISH DECIDED WE NEEDED TO HAVE A HEART TO HEART.
THIS OUGHT TO BE FUN.
KILDARE... ARE YOU... HAPPY?
AUNTIE BELL, I JUST CAME FROM A FUNERAL. I'M NOT EXACTLY TURNING CARTWHEELS.
I BELIEVE SHE MEANS, GENERALLY SPEAKING, ARE YOU HAPPY.
WELL, THEN I'D SAY YES. GENERALLY, MAJORLY AND PRIVATELY SPEAKING, YES I BELIEVE I AM HAPPY. MOSTLY ANYWAY...
YOU DON'T SOUND TOO SURE, DEAR.
WELL, TO BE HONEST, IT'S NOT SOMETHING I GIVE A LOT OF THOUGHT.
IT'S JUST WE WORRY ABOUT YOU. YOU AND GINNY...
OH, BOY. HERE IT COMES.
KILDARE, YOUR UNCLE AND I THINK IT'S TIME YOU CAME HOME FOR GOOD...


IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, KILDARE. AND THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY. AND I MUST BE HONEST. I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT YOU SEE IN THAT DREADFUL PLACE.
WHERE DO I START?
WHITE CASTLE.
SUNRISES.
TEQUILA SHOTS.
IGGY POP...
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A WILLFUL CHILD, KILDARE. BUT YOU NEED TO LOOK PAST YOURSELF. YOU HAVE DUTIES.
NEED I REMIND YOU THAT YOU ARE A PRINCESS. AND THAT WITH THAT STATION THERE COME CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES.
THEY EVEN HAVE IT WRITTEN DOWN SOMEWHERE.
BIG WHUP. WHAT, THEY CAN'T FROLIC AROUND THE MAYPOLE WITHOUT ME? IN NEW YORK EVERYONE GETS TO DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT TO BE. IT'S A GOD-GIVEN RIGHT.

TOSH. THOSE PEOPLE ARE BARBARIANS. NOW I UNDERSTAND YOU YOUNGSTERS AND YOUR NEED FOR INDEPENDENCE, BUT REALLY —
GWYNNION. PUG. WHAT IS IT?
BLOODY CAVALRY. JUST IN TIME.
YEAH. RIGHT. UH... WELL, GINNY WAS RAMBLING ON A BIT. I DIDN'T QUITE KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HER...
SHE'S NOT TIME BOMB, PUG. TRY TALKING TO HER.
GWYNNION. CHILD. WHAT'S THE MATTER?
IT'S NOT RIGHT.

SEEING THEM *DEAD* LIKE THAT. *ALL* DEAD. AMAROU. HARPER. NEVAH. ALL OF THEM. IT'S NOT RIGHT. IT SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED.
IT'S MY FAULT. ALL MY FAULT. SOMETHING... BAD HAPPENED, AND I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE. I THOUGHT IT WOULD GO A WAY.
GINNY, HON. CALM DOWN. WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? NOTHING'S YOUR FAULT.
IT IS. I THINK I KNOW WHO'S DOING IT. WHO'S AFTER US.
GINNY? HOW DO YOU KNOW? DID YOU SEE SOMEONE? PLEASE, TELL US.
THE *DARK ONE*... HE'S MY *CHILD*...

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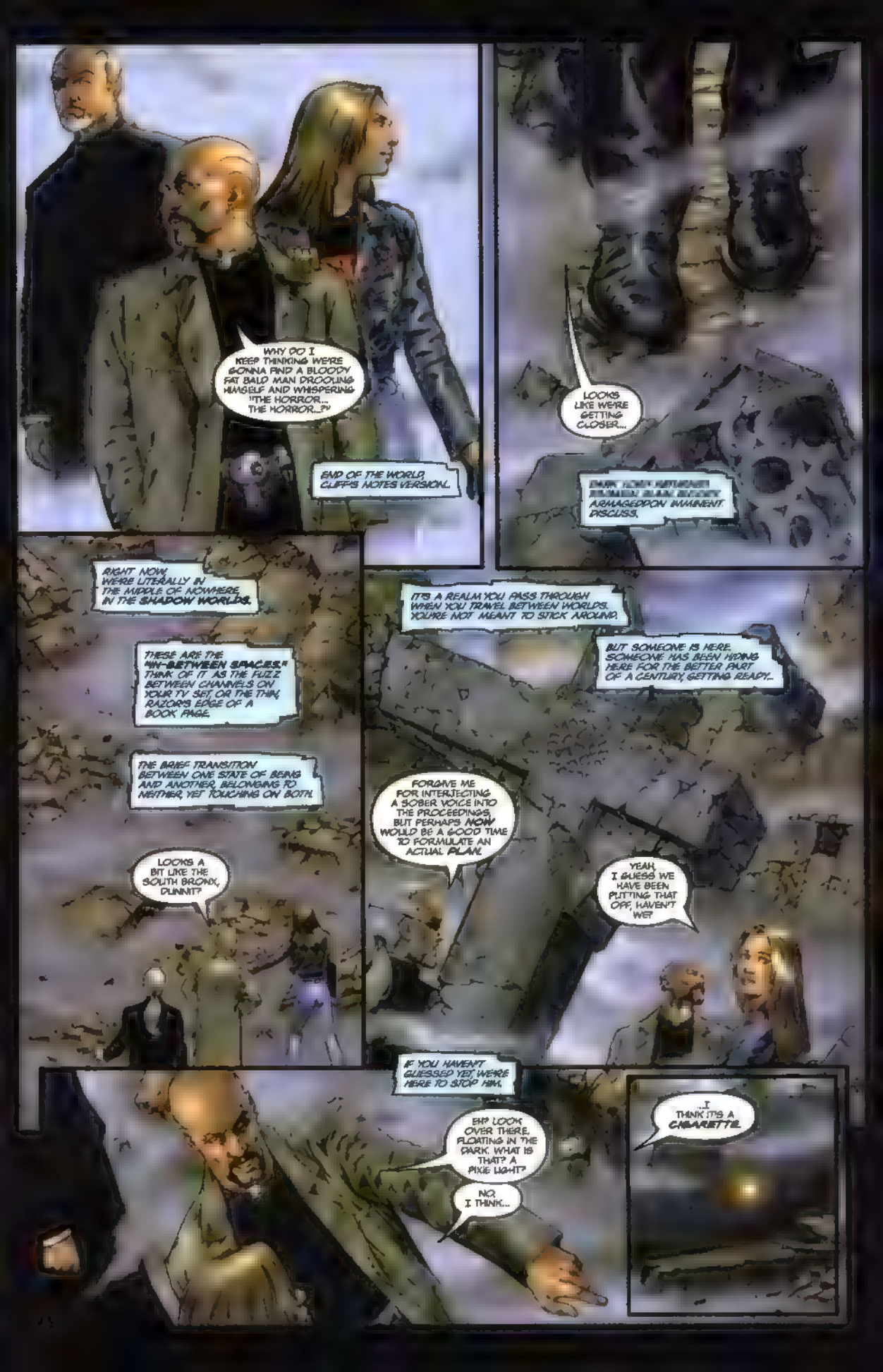
A LITTLE HELP...?
HELLO? ANYBODY OUT THERE?
DAMN IT.

KILDY! CAN Y'HEAR ME, GIRL?!
I SWEAR, I ONLY TOOK MY EYE OFF HER FOR A SECOND!
CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL HERE. STAY CLOSE. I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO GO SEARCHING FOR YOU, TOO.
REMARKABLE
NO! IT'S YOUR SLEEPING CONSCIOUS! NO MONSTER, YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME.
PLUG? IS THAT YOU!?
WHERE ARE YOU!?
OV-EEER HEE-AAHR!
STOP SHOUTING, PLUG. YOU'RE NOT HELPING.
KILDARE, CAN YOU SEE THE FLARE?
GOT IT.
THAT'S IT. JUST A LITTLE FURTHER.
SO MUCH FOR THE BUDDY SYSTEM, HUH?
WELL, NOW THAT THAT LITTLE BIT OF FUN IS OUT OF THE WAY, WE CAN GET DOWN TO SOME REAL UNPLEASANTNESS.
WHICH WAY?
THIS WAY. I'M GETTING SOME WEIRD VIBES. REAP BAD MOJO AHEAD, CAPN.

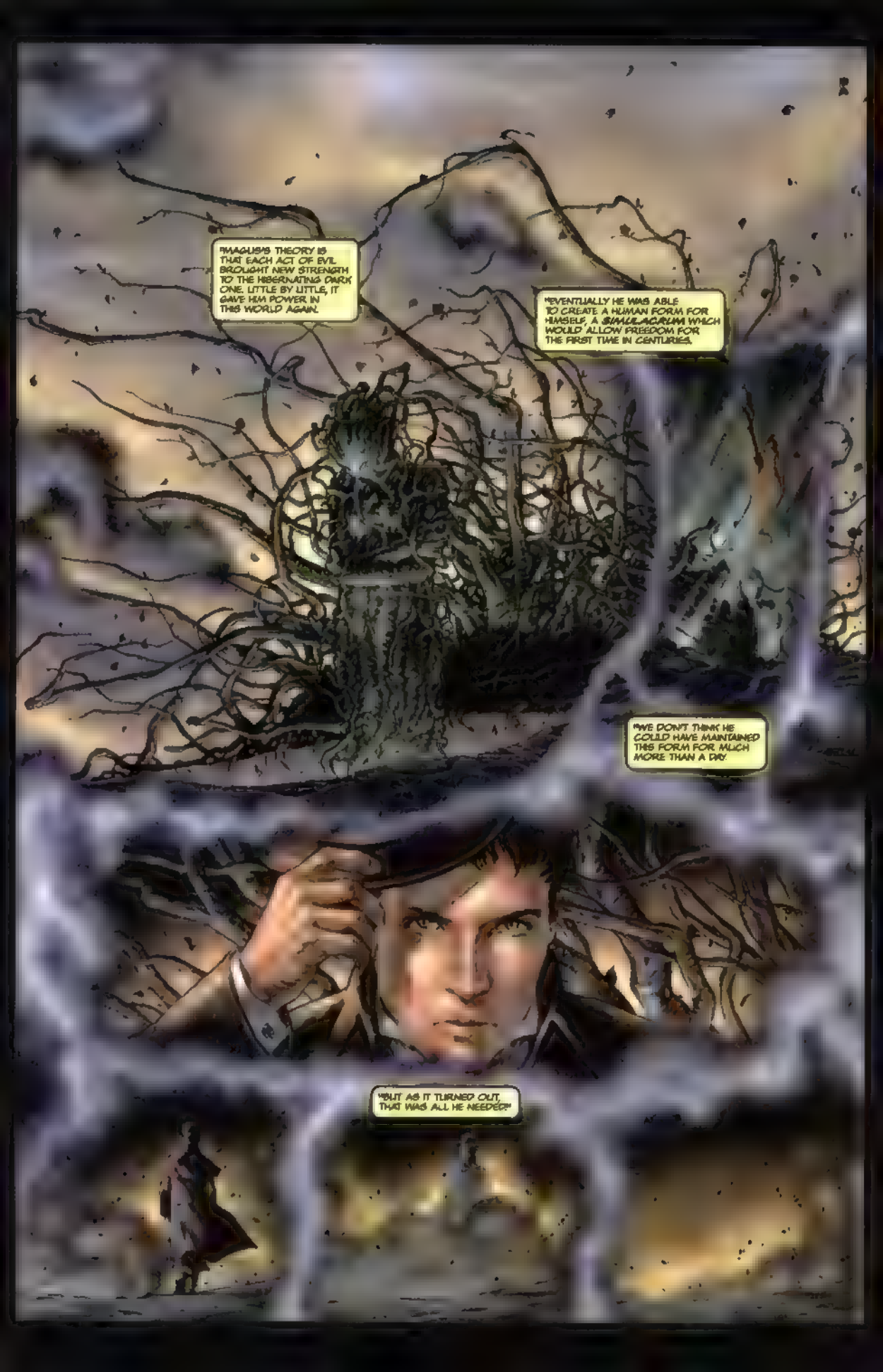

WHY DO I KEEP THINKING WE'RE GONNA FIND A BLOODY FAT BALD MAN DROOLING HIMSELF AND WHISPERING "THE HORROR... THE HORROR...?"
END OF THE WORLD, CLIFF'S NOTES VERSION.
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GETTING CLOSER...
[illegible] ARMAGEDDON IMMINENT. DISCUSS.
RIGHT NOW, WE'RE LITERALLY IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, IN THE SHADOW WORLDS.
THESE ARE THE "IN-BETWEEN SPACES." THINK OF IT AS THE FUZZ BETWEEN CHANNELS ON YOUR TV SET, OR THE THIN, RAZOR'S EDGE OF A BOOK PAGE.
THE BRIEF TRANSITION BETWEEN ONE STATE OF BEING AND ANOTHER, BELONGING TO NEITHER, YET TOUCHING ON BOTH.
LOOKS A BIT LIKE THE SOUTH BRONX, DUNNIT?
IT'S A REALM YOU PASS THROUGH WHEN YOU TRAVEL BETWEEN WORLDS. YOU'RE NOT MEANT TO STICK AROUND.
BUT SOMEONE IS HERE. SOMEONE HAS BEEN HIDING HERE FOR THE BETTER PART OF A CENTURY, GETTING READY...
FORGIVE ME FOR INTERJECTING A SOBER VOICE INTO THE PROCEEDINGS, BUT PERHAPS NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO FORMULATE AN ACTUAL PLAN.
YEAH, I GUESS WE HAVE BEEN PUTTING THAT OFF, HAVEN'T WE?
IF YOU HAVEN'T GUESSED YET, WE'RE HERE TO STOP HIM.
EH? LOOK OVER THERE, FLOATING IN THE DARK. WHAT IS THAT? A PIXIE LIGHT?
NO, I THINK...
...I THINK IT'S A CIGARETTE.

ROLAND? IS THAT YOU!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
ALL RIGHT, YOU LOT FESS UP. YOU'RE THROWING A SURPRISE PARTY FOR ME.
SHHH.
ROLAND, THIS IS MAGNUS MAGUS, AN OLD FRIEND. MAGUS, THIS IS ROLAND, AND YOU KNOW PUG, OF COURSE.
HEY.
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
I WAS LOOKING FOR A FRIEND. SHE WAS ABDUCTED. I THINK THEY THOUGHT SHE WAS YOU.
ME!? WHY WOULD ANYONE THINK THAT?
I GAVE HER A GIFT. SHE HAD THE WHIFF OF GLAMOUR ABOUT HER. PRETTY GIRL WITH A BIT OF MAGIC. I DON'T THINK THESE BEASTIES HAVE A LOT OF BRAIN POWER.
HIS MINIONS... DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY THERE ARE?
LOTS.
BUT DON'T WORRY...
...THINGS ARE MUCH WORSE THAN YOU THINK.

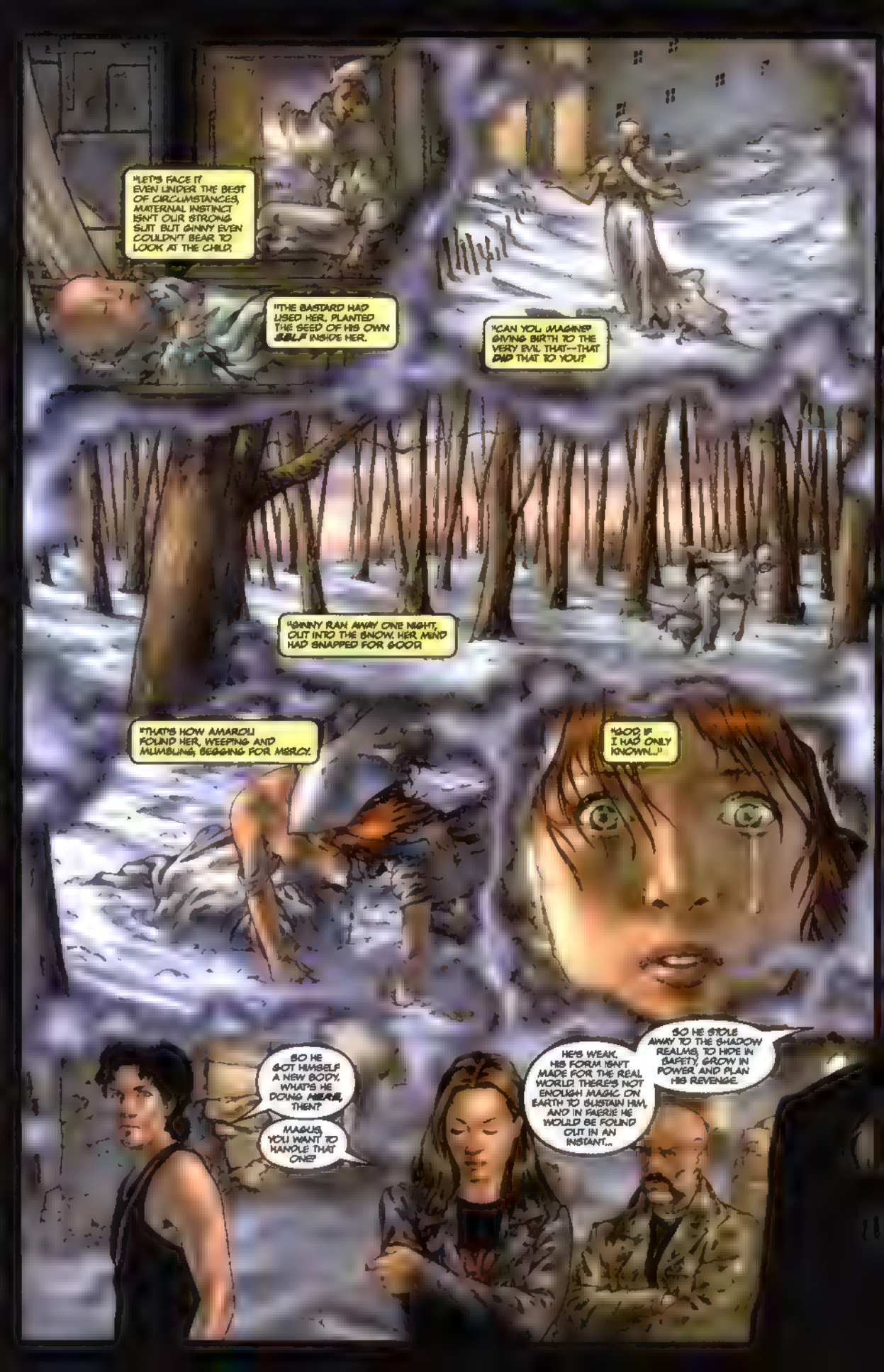
ARIA
CREATED BY
BRIAN HOLGUIN
AND BRIAN
HABERLIN
AMONG RUINS
STORY BY BRIAN HOLGUIN
ART BY JAY ANACLETO
COLORS BY AVALON STUDIO'S
ANDY TROY
LETTERS BY DENNIS HEISLER
TAKE A LOOK.
BLOODY HELL.

"SO, SOMEONE WANT TO BRING ME UP TO SPEED?!"
"BETWEEN WHAT GINNY TOLD US AND WHAT MAGUS WAS ABLE TO DIG UP, HERE'S WHAT WE FIGURE...
PAY ATTENTION, THIS GETS WEIRD.
"YOU'VE HEARD OF THE DARK ONE. THE NAMELESS SCOURGE. THE KING OF SHADOWS...RIGHT?
"BACK WHEN THE OLD MAGIC WAS BEGINNING TO FADE FROM EARTH, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A NEAT IDEA TO CONQUER IT AND FAERIE.
"HE SAID OUR KIND HAD GROWN TOO SOFT, TOO DOMESTICATED FROM MINGLING WITH HUMANS. HE MIGHT'VE HAD A POINT, TOO.
"OUR RACE WAS DYING OFF, MORE AND MORE OF OUR WOMEN WERE FOUND TO BE BARREN.
"ANYWAY, HE FIGHTS THIS WAR THAT LASTS A HUNDRED YEARS. IT ALL CAME TO AN END AT THE SIEGE OF BLACKWALL.
"IT WAS A TERRIBLE MESS. THE BATTLE HAD SPILLED OUT BETWEEN WORLDS. THE DARK ONE WAS FINALLY SLAIN IN THE FIELDS OF SALISBURY, IN ENGLAND.
"BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED THAT DAY. MY FATHER WAS ONE OF THEM.
BUT IT TURNS OUT, THE DARK ONE WASN'T DEAD, NOT QUITE, ANYWAY
"LEGEND TELLS OF A GREAT THORN BUSH, WITH BLACK ROSES, THAT GREW FROM WHERE HIS BLOOD SEEPED INTO THE GROUND..."

"THE PETALS OF THIS THORN BUSH TOOK FLIGHT ON THE WIND, AND SPREAD WICKEDNESS WHEREVER THEY FELL.
"HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF STRANGE, SEEMINGLY RANDOM OCCURRENCES.
"MOTHERS WHO DROWNED THEIR CHILDREN, BELIEVING THEM TO BE UNDER SOME GOBLIN CURSE.
"MEN SEEING STRANGE SIGHTS IN THE EVENING SHADOWS.
"SEEKING ANY REMEDY TO ESCAPE THEIR IMAGINED TORMENTORS.
"IN 1766, LONDON ALL BUT BURNT TO THE GROUND BECAUSE OF A BLACKSMITH THOUGHT THE SHADOWS WERE LAUGHING AT HIM.
"THERE'S LOTS MORE. A VICTORIAN PAINTER NAMED RICHARD DADD BECAME INCREASINGLY OBSESSED WITH FAERIES.
"HE MURDERED HIS FATHER, CUT HIS HEAD OFF WITH AN AX, CONVINCED THE OLD MAN WAS THE DARK ONE.
"HE SPENT THE REST OF HIS DAYS PAINTING ELABORATE FAERIE SCENES WHILE CONFINED TO BEDLAM HOSPITAL."


"MAGUS'S THEORY IS THAT EACH ACT OF EVIL BROUGHT NEW STRENGTH TO THE HIBERNATING DARK ONE. LITTLE BY LITTLE, IT GAVE HIM POWER IN THIS WORLD AGAIN.
"EVENTUALLY HE WAS ABLE TO CREATE A HUMAN FORM FOR HIMSELF, A *SIMULACRUM* WHICH WOULD ALLOW FREEDOM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CENTURIES.
"WE DON'T THINK HE COULD HAVE MAINTAINED THIS FORM FOR MUCH MORE THAN A DAY.
"BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, THAT WAS ALL HE NEEDED."

"IN THOSE DAYS, GINNY WAS A BIT OF A RAMBLING ROSE, AS THEY SAY. CAREFREE. FEARLESS.
"A TALL, CHARMING STRANGER, AN IDLE EVENING...SHE NEVER SUSPECTED A THING.
"NONE OF US EVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT HAPPENED TO HER, WHAT DROVE HER MAD. BUT WE DO NOW. THAT FILTHY BASTARD RAPED HER, RAPED HER BODY AND RAPED HER MIND.
"HE LEFT HER BROKEN AND BATTERED, WITH SOMETHING DARK AND EVIL GROWING INSIDE HER.
"IN THE STATE SHE WAS IN, GINNY COULDN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO HER.
"HOW COULD SHE? THERE HADN'T BEEN A FULL BLOODED FAERIE CHILD BORN IN MORE THAN 500 YEARS.
"SHE STUMBLED UPON A CONVENT, WHERE THEY TENDED TO HER, TAKING PITY ON THIS POOR, SIMPLETON
"BUT THE EXPERIENCE DROVE GINNY FURTHER INTO MADNESS."


"LET'S FACE IT. EVEN UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, MATERNAL INSTINCT ISN'T OUR STRONG SUIT. BUT GINNY EVEN COULDN'T BEAR TO LOOK AT THE CHILD.
"THE BASTARD HAD USED HER, PLANTED THE SEED OF HIS OWN EVIL INSIDE HER.
"CAN YOU IMAGINE GIVING BIRTH TO THE VERY EVIL THAT--THAT RAPED THAT TO YOU?
"GINNY RAN AWAY ONE NIGHT, OUT INTO THE SNOW. HER MIND HAD SNAPPED FOR GOOD.
"THAT'S HOW AMAROLI FOUND HER, WEEPING AND MUMBLING, BEGGING FOR MERCY.
"GOD, IF I HAD ONLY KNOWN..."
SO HE GOT HIMSELF A NEW BODY. WHAT'S HE DOING HERE, THEN?
MAGUS, YOU WANT TO HANDLE THAT ONE?
HE'S WEAK. HIS FORM ISN'T MADE FOR THE REAL WORLD. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH MAGIC ON EARTH TO SUSTAIN HIM, AND IN FAERIE HE WOULD BE FOUND OUT IN AN INSTANT...
SO HE STOLE AWAY TO THE SHADOW REALMS, TO HIDE IN SAFETY, GROW IN POWER, AND PLAN HIS REVENGE.

"PATIENCE IS CLEARLY NOT SOMETHING HE'S LACKING.
"WE KNOW HE CAN CREATE MINIONS, MINDLESS SURROGATES TO ACT ON HIS BEHALF.
"THOSE ARE WHAT ATTACKED THE PUB AND FOLLOWED KILDARE AND NO DOUBT ABDUCTED YOUR FRIEND, ROLAND, AND WHICH WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GREENMAN MASSACRE.
"BUT MY GUESS HE IS PREPARING A PERMANENT VESSEL. SOME HAPLESS HUMAN TO HOST HIS SPIRIT.
MASTER, I AM READY.
"THE ONLY QUESTION IS WHO?"

IN THE END, IT WAS ROLAND WHO CAME UP WITH THE PLAN. UNFORTUNATELY, A BIG PART OF HIS PLAN INVOLVED WALKING STRAIGHT INTO THE LION'S DEN.
I'M NOT GOING TO PRETEND ANY OF US REALLY THOUGHT IT WOULD WORK, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAD ANY BETTER IDEAS.
THERE WAS ONLY ONE PERSON WE THOUGHT COULD GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE DARK ONE, ONLY WE DIDN'T REALLY THINK SHE WOULD BE UP TO THE JOB.
YOU SURE YOU'RE READY? I DON'T WANT YOU NAPPING THE BALL WHEN WE'RE NEAR THE GOAL LINE.
I ASSURE YOU, PUG, I AM MORE THAN ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR THE TASK AT HAND.
STOP TALKING LIKE THAT. YOU SOUND LIKE A TOSSER.
BITE ME, PUG.
YEAH, THAT'S BETTER.
THE GREAT AND POWERFUL OZ, I PRESUME?

AS IT TURNS OUT, WE WERE JUST IN TIME. HE WAS PREPARING THE RITUAL TO PLACE HIMSELF IN THE HUMAN "VESSEL" JUST LIKE MAGUS PREDICTED.
HE HAD AMASSED ENOUGH POWER, AND HAD SOME SHIRTLESS GIT STANDING ON A HILL IN ENGLAND WAITING TO BE HIS EVIL HANDPUPPET.
HE DIDN'T SEEM AT ALL SURPRISED TO HAVE INTRUDERS.
I SEE WE HAVE VISITORS. HOW LOVELY.
YOU MUST BE MY "AUNTIE" KILDARE
I WAS WONDERING HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE YOU TO FIND ME.

PUG WAS NEVER ONE FOR THE DIPLOMATIC APPROACH.
ALL RIGHT, YOU UGLY BASTARDS, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.
BESIDES, WE NEEDED THE CHAOS TO KEEP THE DARK ONE FROM REALIZING WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING.
PUG, WHAT DO I DO?
DO? ARE YOU KIDDING ME? FIGHT, YOU DAMN EEJIT!
RUMOR HAS IT YOU'VE GOT A BIT OF MAGIC. NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO USE IT.
ALL RIGHT, SUNSHINE SHOW ME THE SMILE. THAT'S IT.
PUG?
NOW, IF WE COULD JUST MANAGE NOT TO GET OURSELVES KILLED.

UGHN!
PUGH. I DON'T THINK THIS IS WORKING--- AAAAH!
OKAY, SO THAT PART WASN'T EXACTLY IN THE PLAN. I DOUBT MAGUS WOULD HAVE GONE ALONG WITH IT IF IT WERE.
SHITE. GET OUT OF MY WAY, YOU BASTARDS.
HOLD ON. HOLD ON, GIRL. I'M ON MY WAY
ENOUGH! STOP THIS NONSENSE RIGHT NOW, UNLESS YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR FRIEND KILLED

DO NOT THREATEN ME. YOU ARE IN MY HOME. I SUGGEST YOU SHOW ME SOME RESPECT.
LOOK MATE, I'M GONNA COUNT TO...WEL... I'M NOT GONNA COUNT AT ALL.
STOP IT!
AYE! LEAVE HER, ALONE YOU BASTARD!
EH?
WHO—?

STOP IT! ALL OF YOU! THIS IS MY FAULT!
I'M SORRY. I SHOULD HAVE NEVER KEPT THIS A SECRET. AND I SHOULD NEVER LEFT YOU AS A CHILD.
PLEASE, FORGIVE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME.
GINNY, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THEY TRIED TO STOP ME. THEY DIDN'T WANT ME TO COME. BUT I ESCAPED. I'M MUCH CLEVERER THAN THEY THINK.
PLEASE... I'M SORRY. I'M [illegible] YOU. BUT I NEVER FORGOT YOU...
I'M NOT YOUR CHILD, WOMAN. YOU WERE MERELY A VESSEL THROUGH WHICH [illegible]
NO. DON'T SAY THAT. YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT. PLEASE...I'M [illegible]...
MOTHER? NO. YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER. STILL, YOU ARE A PRETTY [illegible] WOMAN.

MIGHT BE WORTH KEEPING YOU AROUND FOR A BIT OF SPORT
PLEASE, JUST LET ME... HOLD YOU JUST FOR A MINUTE. I JUST WANT TO TOUCH MY BABY AGAIN.
GINNY, YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE. THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS SITUATION. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON.
SHE'S A SILLY LITTLE BITCH, ISN'T SHE?
BUT THAT'S WHY IT IS I CHOSE HER IN THE FIRST PLACE. NOW, WHERE WERE WE?
I WAS ABOUT TO SLICE YOUR POXY GUTS OPEN.
EXCUSE ME?

AAUUGH!
YOU KILLED MY FATHER, YOU MALIGNANT TURD.
I HOPE THAT HURTS.
YOU!? BUT THEN WHO--?
CHEERS, MATE. MAGNUS MAGUS AT YOUR SERVICE.
HA. YOU THINK YOU'VE WON? YOU CAN'T STOP ME, I'LL JUST RETURN AGAIN... YOU CAN'T BIND MY SPIRIT.
OH, BUT I CAN. I KNOW YOUR TRUE NAME...
NO!

DID IT WORK, MAGUS?
I'M NOT SURE. I BELIEVE SO.
SEVEN HELLS! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
HIS SHADOW WORLD IS FALLING APART. HE MUST HAVE MADE THE LEAP TO THE NEW HOST BODY.
OKAY. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, AND HOPE THAT ROLAND DID HIS JOB.
SALISBURY, ENGLAND.
MASTER, I AWAIT YOU. YOUR HUMBLE VESSEL STANDS READY.
NOT GONNA HAPPEN, FRIEND. NOT TODAY.
HAAAAH!
LISTEN, I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THIS. NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT. JUST FELL IN THE WRONG CROWD, I GUESS.

NO! LET ME OUT OF HERE. UNBIND ME.
IS THAT HIM?
THAT'S HIM.
CAN YOU MANAGE FROM HERE? THERE'S SOMEONE I HAVE TO GO FETCH, BACK IN THE SHADOW REALMS.
YEAH. WE GOT IT. THANKS, ROLAND. AND GOOD LUCK.
ALL RIGHT THEN, LET'S GET TO IT.
BAD NEWS, MATE. I'M AFRAID YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS ONE BIT.

FIVE MONTHS LATER.
WE NEVER TOLD GINNY WHAT HAPPENED. I FIGURED THAT WAS FOR THE BEST. AFTER IT WAS ALL OVER SHE CAME TO STAY WITH ME.
SHE'S DOING MUCH BETTER AND THINGS HAVE SETTLED DOWN NICELY.
EXCUSE ME, MISS. COULD I TAKE A LOOK AT SOMETHING IN THAT CASE?
SURE. HANG ON A SEC.
SKY CHURCH
I WAS MADE TO LOVE MAH-GIC...ALL ITS WONDER TO KNOW... BUT YOU ALL LOST THAT MA-HA-GIC... MANY, MANY, MANY YEARS AGO...
WHICH ONE WERE YOU INTERESTED IN?
THAT LITTLE ONE. THE BLACK GLASSY KIND OF THING.
OH, I'M SORRY. I'M AFRAID THAT ONE'S NOT FOR SALE. IT BELONGED TO A RATHER DISTANT RELATIVE. I KIND OF WANT TO KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY.
BUT I THINK I'VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE YOU MIGHT LIKE...
I THINK WE'VE BOTH HAD ENOUGH ADVENTURE FOR A WHILE.